

University of Cape Town

Faculty of Humanities

Anthropology

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Municipally-Managed Janitor-Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

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Abstract

Informal settlement sanitation service delivery continues as one the most urgent, imposing challenges of contemporary basic service provision in South Africa. Municipal, provincial and national sanitation and political authorities expect informal settlement residents to take ownership of and responsibility for state-installed toilet facilities, with municipally-managed janitorial services also in operation in many settlements countrywide. Yet resident-driven sanitation management practices and the site-specific realities of informal settlements have not been adequately understood nor have they informed basic service delivery development. This has in part led to uncertainty in terms of how to designate and sustain responsibilities to relevant stakeholders regarding sanitation maintenance.

Based on fieldwork in the Masiphumelele Wetlands informal settlement and temporary relocation area on Cape Town's southern peninsula, this dissertation describes a range of communally-managed sanitation systems that operate alongside municipally-managed janitorial services and which demonstrate varying degrees of local senses of ownership of responsibility for municipally-provided flush toilet facilities. A bottom-up, iterative development approach is argued for, one that critically considers the spectrum of factors that constrain and stimulate ownership and responsibility by informal settlement residents as well as the cultural contingencies that constitute communal sanitation management in informal settlements.

Acknowledgements

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Contents

List of Tables	5
List of Maps	5
List of Photos	5
List of Acronyms	7
Introduction	8
CHAPTER 1: Research Conceptualization and Design	12
1.1 Research Scope	12
1.2 Research Question & Rationale	13
1.3 Research Methods	15
1.4 Ethical Considerations	20
CHAPTER 2: Sanitation in South African Informal Settlements & the Question of Ownership	23
2.1 Sanitation in South African Informal Settlements	23
2.1.2 Sanitation Policy Development & Ownership	24
2.2 Sanitation as Dignity	26
2.3 Ownership of Basic Services in the Post-Apartheid Context	28
2.3.1 Ownership & Responsibility in Development Discourse	29
2.4 Sanitation in Cape Town	31
2.5 Masiphumelele Historical Overview	32
2.6 Masiphumelele Demographics & Human Settlement	34
CHAPTER 3: Communal and Municipally-administered janitor-Managed Sanitation in the Wetlands	37
3.1 Sanitation in the Wetlands	37
3.1.1 Wetlands Flush Toilets by Section	37
3.1.2 Communally-Managed Sanitation	41
3.1.3 Volunteer Toilet Cleaning	41
3.1.4 The Origins of Communal Lock-and-Key Sanitation Management	43
3.2 Municipally-managed janitorial Services	45

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

3.2.1	Arranging Access to Locked Toilets	47
3.2.2	Residents' Perceptions	51
CHAPTER 4: Locked or Not? Ownership of and Responsibility for Toilets		54
4.1	Key-Holding Participants	54
4.2	Setting up and Sustaining Household Groups to Share Locked Toilets	55
4.3	Maintenance Practices and Sharing Responsibilities	57
4.4	Lending Keys and Extending Sharing of Locked Toilets	60
4.5	Consequences of the Lock-and-Key System for Non-Key Holding Participants	63
4.5.1	Residents' Expectations	69
CHAPTER 5: Communal & Municipally-administered janitor-Managed Sanitation in the TRA & Backyards		73
5.1	Sanitation in the TRA	73
5.1.1	Communal Responsibility and Janitorial Services	74
5.2	Sanitation in Backyards	75
5.2.1	Communal Responsibility by Backyarders	76
CHAPTER 6: Conclusions		79
6.1	Adversity and Adaptation in the Wetlands	80
6.2.	Crises within Crises	82
6.3	Reconceptualizing Ownership	83
6.4	On-the-Ground Realities and Development Design and Implementation	84
REFERENCES		86

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

List of Tables

Table 1:	Cape Town sanitation facilities.	32
Table 2:	Flush toilets and standpipes in the Wetlands.	38
Table 3:	Key-holding interviewed participants.	54
Table 4:	Non-key holding participants.	64

List of Maps

Map 1:	Geographical location of Masiphumelele on Cape Town's southern peninsula.	33
Map 2:	Masiphumelele housing area map.	36
Map 3:	Wetlands Flush Toilets by Section.	40

List of Photos

Photo 1:	Vena and me out on a day's fieldwork in Masiphumelele.	17
Photo 2:	A chilly morning start to a long day's interviews.	17
Photo 3:	Laughing and chatting with some men on a bench.	19
Photo 4:	An interviewee, Patricia, a Wetlands resident.	19
Photo 5:	Fish Hoek valley.	33
Photo 6:	Masiphumelele TRA.	34
Photo 7:	Masiphumelele Wetlands.	34
Photo 8:	A formal part of Masiphumelele.	35
Photo 9:	A RDP house with five backyard dwellings on a single plot of land.	35
Photo 10:	C section toilets.	37
Photo 11:	D section toilets	37
Photo 12:	Z section toilets.	39
Photo 13:	Zulu section toilets.	39
Photo 14:	A section toilets.	39
Photo 15:	E section toilets.	39
Photo 16:	B section toilets.	39
Photo 17:	Male Masiphumelele Janitors	46
Photo 18:	Female janitors servicing toilets in Wetlands E section.	46
Photo 19:	Nesizwa cleaning an unlocked toilet in Z section.	50

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Photo 20:	Thembelani radioing WSISU.	50
Photo 21:	Male janitorial team clearing overgrowth in the TRA.	53
Photo 22:	Women washing and hanging up clothes in the Wetlands.	53
Photo 23:	A cleaning roster for a household sharing group in Zulu section.	57
Photo 24:	A wooden toilet seat installed.	57
Photo 25:	Chumani, holding the lock which secures the toilet he and his family use.	60
Photo 26:	A young girl cleaning a toilet in Wetlands C section.	60
Photo 27:	Toilet in A section in disgusting condition.	65
Photo 28:	Toilet in C section completely blocked up with human excrement.	65
Photo 29:	One of the Wetlands canals clogged with rubbish and human waste.	66
Photo 30:	Toilet in D section blocked with newspaper.	66
Photo 31:	A young girl emptying urine in a Wetlands canal.	68
Photo 32:	A small boy carrying a bucket of human waste to dump in a nearby canal.	68
Photo 33:	A girl at a Wetlands canal hunches tiredly before washing some dishes.	72
Photo 34:	A woman stands despairingly outside her shack.	72
Photo 35:	The TRA entrance. Some toilets can be seen in the background.	74
Photo 36:	Mounds of dirt dropped by O&M vehicles for residents to dam up shacks and toilets.	74
Photo 37:	Backyard shack alongside a RDP house.	78
Photo 38:	Five backyard dwellings alongside an RDP house in central Masiphumelele.	78

List of Acronyms

AAA	American Anthropological Association
ANC	African National Congress
CoCT	City of Cape Town
DHS	Department of Human Settlements
DWA	Department of Water Affairs
DWAF	Department of Water Affairs and Forestry
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
FBS	Free Basic Services
O&M	Operation and Maintenance
MGSs	Millennium Development Goals
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Plan
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
TRA	Temporary Relocation Area
UCT	University of Cape Town
UN	United Nations
UWMG	Urban Water Management Group (from 2013 the Urban Water Management Research Unit)
WHO	World Health Organization
WRC	South African Water Research Commission
WSISU	Water and Sanitation for Informal Settlements Unit
WSSD	World Summit for Social Development

Introduction

The world is in the throes of a sanitation crisis. Globally 2.6 billion people do not have access to a toilet (United Nations 2013). What exactly 'access to a toilet' means is contingent on circumstance and country-specific classifications, yet the reality of poor sanitation and related health, social, economic and environmental consequences can scarcely be ignored. A child dies every 20 seconds from diseases caused by poor sanitation conditions; 1.46 million children a year. Over 4,000 people die from preventable, sanitation-related diseases daily (UN 2013). Half the hospital beds in developing countries are filled with patients with diarrhoea (World Health Organization 2012). Poor sanitation has drastic effects on health, economic productivity, social cohesion, and indeed human dignity, and has become a global development priority.

Seen within a larger context, inadequate sanitation is but one of many manifestations of poverty worldwide and is closely linked to burgeoning populations, lack of infrastructure and scarce water resources in city slums. Added to this, national governments often turn a blind eye to the socio-political ramifications of poverty. Despite relative progress since the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), tremendous work still has to be done to ameliorate the challenge. At the heart of this issue is the question of governance. Given the situation of hundreds of millions of people in densely-populated areas with insecure footing, the diffusion of ownership and responsibility is particularly necessary, especially in informal settlements. Which sanitation management and maintenance systems operate most effectively in informal settlements, and which factors stimulate or constraint the efficacy of such systems? Attempting to answer such questions forms the core of this dissertation, which focuses on communally-managed and municipally-managed janitor-serviced flush toilet facilities in the Wetlands and TRA (temporary relocation area) informal settlements of Masiphumelele, Cape Town.

In so-called slums worldwide – accounting for well over a billion and a half people – the challenge of sanitation service delivery has become a global development conundrum. A staggering 45% of urban populations in what are broadly classed as developing nations – such as Brazil, India, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Kenya, South Africa – live in informal settlements, areas with tenuous legal status and little formalization by state authorities. It is in the slums of cities like Mumbai, Dhaka, Nairobi, Lima and Cape Town where governments are confronted with one of the thorniest challenges in contemporary global urban development. It is estimated that 43% of urban populations in developing countries currently live in slums (UN Habitat 2012). By 2020 this will rise to 1.5 billion. Slum dwellers are in many respects invisible, forgotten people, pushed to the margins of society. While a multitude of livelihoods and standards of living exist, the majority of slum dwellers are extremely vulnerable to a plague of perils and often ostracized by authorities in charge of upgrading urban informal settlements (Joshi, Fawcett and Mannan 2011).

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Africa is beset with formidable challenges regarding alleviating poverty in informal settlements. An estimated 200 million people in Africa live in slums, roughly a fifth of the world total.¹ Anna Tibaijuka, executive director of UN-Habitat the UN agency for human settlements, states and predicts that "Africa is urbanizing faster than any other continent, so much so that by 2030, it will cease to be a rural continent" (2010:5). Africa's population will grow faster than any other place on earth over the next century; it is expected to more than double to around 2.3 billion (UN 2012). "African governments have by in large done little to manage rapid urbanization and many do not formally recognize slums as legal sites of occupation" (Tibaijuka 2010:8). In the main, slums – also called informal settlements – are not provided with public services like electricity, sanitation, roads, housing, health care and education.

According to the UN Environment Programme, more than a quarter of Africa's 200 million slum dwellers do not have access to safe drinking water and 175 million lack access to basic sanitation (Mambo 2013). Despite being the continent's wealthiest, most developed country, South Africa is faced with daunting poverty-related issues. Thuthukani Ndebele, of the South African Institute of Race Relations, argues that "Government has been struggling to cope with the huge influx of people, to solve infrastructure problems and provide services...people feel abandoned" (2012). This sense of abandonment is a major theme addressed in this dissertation. Despite it, and as I show, Masiphumelele informal settlement residents demonstrated a significant willingness to take ownership of and responsibility for municipally-provided toilets, through establishing and sustaining communally-managed sanitation systems that they constituted and maintained via kinship ties and varying forms of social relations.

At the 1994 dawn of South African democracy, an estimated 21 million South Africans were without basic sanitation (Stats SA). To reduce this backlog government introduced the Water Supply and Sanitation White Paper in 2001. However, hindrances, attributed primarily to poverty, underemployment and high operational costs, meant that the previously marginalised poor were unable to pay service delivery charges (Mambo 2013). Moreover, the informal settlements' rapid sprawl and municipalities' inability to keep up with service delivery have produced a situation where the dilemma of providing basic sanitation to all has proven to be far more complicated and challenging than originally imagined (Pillay et al 2006).

Informal settlement sanitation service delivery in South Africa continues to be constrained by several critical factors. These factors can be conceptualized according to a range of interconnected categories; social, cultural, environmental, political, economic and historical. In this dissertation I analyse various challenges, fractures and

¹ **Africa's rapid urbanization fuelling social tensions** Tuesday 27 August 2013 <http://www.sabc.co.za/news/a/cd3bb70040dfc5e88421a5434f2981a1/Africas-rapid-urbanization-fuelling-social-tensions-20132708>

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

cleavages related to various models of sanitation management in Masiphumelele. Predominantly informed by target-driven, technological approaches and politically correct models, and largely devoid of particularistic, on-the-ground understanding, implementing and sustaining basic sanitation in informal settlements endures as an arduous assignment for responsible authorities (Schouten & Mathenge 2010). With this in mind, I argue that it is crucial to design and implement sanitation facilities and management systems which pay careful attention to site-specific circumstances and are informed by understandings of each given area's history of sanitation services.

Sanitation service delivery has tended to adhere to top-down policies mandated by national government and has largely failed to take into consideration nuances and circumstances of specific areas (Fjeldstad 2004; Naidoo and Chidley 2009; Mjoli and Bhawgan 2010; Taing et al. 2013). Furthermore, sanitation development has been relatively limited in informal settlements, with the focus of interventions more on formally recognized areas where residents pay for land tenure and utilities. When sanitation development does take place in informal settlements, more often than not it imposes socially unsustainable technologies and maintenance systems consequently bringing about a plethora of detrimental effects into already precarious social milieus (Crankshaw 2008). Policies and programmes for informal settlement residents rarely acknowledge or address the complexity of micro-political contexts, including the realities of citizenship, legality and security of tenure in such places (Verhagen and Ryan 2008; Joshi, Fawcett and Mannan 2011).

This dissertation is a move toward a bottom-up approach that is aware of site-specific circumstances and quotidian realities. Its starting point is that it is crucial to go beyond the limitations of 'one-size-fits-all' models and to understand and explore the societies, localities and histories within which development projects are situated (Burra et al. 2003; Jenkins and Scott 2007). Prior to designing plans, I suggest, it is vital to integrate understandings of local contexts and their permutations. Informal settlement sanitation development practice must therefore be undergirded by continually shifting perspectives and a willingness to challenge and recraft parochial modes of practicing development.

This study is located within a broader South African urban development context, specifically in the Masiphumelele Wetlands informal settlement. This site provides a microcosm of the far-reaching, dire realities of poverty and related lack of mitigation of poverty by responsible authorities in South Africa. I discuss sanitation service delivery and conditions, specifically questions around ownership and responsibility. Since the provision of sanitation on a household basis is both technically and financially nearly impossible in such areas, toilets are provided as 'public' or 'communal' facilities, intended to be shared on a single toilet-to-several-households basis. In the Wetlands, the situation is strained, with only 132 toilets in an area of over 10,000 people. How then are people to manage shared toilets in contexts where cohesive organization of sanitation facilities is beset with immense difficulties?

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Far more than greater technological expertise, and at least as much as bigger budgets, sanitation development needs to consider how local ownership and management of facilities can be achieved.

In South Africa, local authorities have increasingly taken the line that informal settlement residents should take ownership of and responsibility for public toilets. Along with development buzzwords like 'partnership', 'participation' and 'collaboration', 'ownership' has gained growing importance within socio-economic development discourse. Yet, as I argue, such expectations misconstrue and fail to take into account on-the-ground informal settlement complexities. Expressions of ownership will take on variegated forms from one informal settlement to another and are, moreover, set within very different contexts and arise for various different reasons. Much more than just a buzzword, ownership is central to debates on slum sanitation, where it has to be operationalized within precarious contexts. My experience has led me to call for multi-factorial approaches grounded in understandings of shifts, flows and contingencies in informal settlements, in particular awareness of the nuances of social, cultural and political relationships that constitute and perpetuate ways of cooperating in the maintenance and management of sanitation facilities.

CHAPTER 1

Research Conceptualization and Design

1.1 Research Scope

This study's focus on sanitation falls against the backdrop of the delivery of free basic services to South Africans previously disadvantaged by apartheid; that is, predominantly black, and to lesser extents coloured and Indian people, who have historically been socially, economically and politically marginalized (Still et al. 2009). Although notable inroads have been made in the last two decades, the reality is that basic services are not being provided comprehensively for poor South Africans. This is despite national legislation requiring local authorities to provide basic services to such persons; most notably within the ambit of the Reconstruction and Development Plan, drawn up by the government over 20 years ago in order to mitigate socio-economic inequalities (RDP 1996).

In particular, I analyse the factors that constrain as well as facilitate ownership of and responsibility for municipally-provided flush toilets in the Masiphumelele Wetlands. This is done by presenting data on two main kinds of sanitation management systems; those organized communally by local residents and leaders (lock-and-key models) and those municipally organized (janitorial services). Data from two other areas, Masiphumelele's TRA and backyarders in formal parts of Masiphumelele, are also presented in order to compare with the Wetlands and provide further insight into consideration around the social dynamics that stimulate and constrain sanitation management.

Residents of the TRA (locally known as *Makhayangoku* in isiXhosa, meaning 'homes for all') enjoy relative ease of access to basic services, with dwelling sizes being much larger than in the Wetlands and the population far smaller, some 1,000 residents. Municipally provided janitorial services operated in both these areas during fieldwork; however communally-managed lock-and-key systems were in operation exclusively in the Wetlands. These two systems will be compared and their relative merits and drawbacks discussed and analysed.

I conducted three months of fieldwork from late April to late July 2013 plus follow-up research throughout the rest of that year. Fieldwork was done primarily in the Wetlands and, to a lesser extent, in the TRA and other parts of Masiphumelele to generate breadth of perspective and contextualization. The original intention of the research was to investigate the impact and social/institutional constraints of municipally-managed janitorial services within an informal settlement context. This was part of a study commissioned by the South African Water Research

Commission (WRC) in early 2013, Study K5/2120, undertaken by three social anthropology post-graduate students over the course of 15 months in three different Western Cape informal settlements. Alongside data gathered for the WRC study I also collected data for my dissertation. A major conclusion of a previous WRC study, K5/1827 (Taing et al 2013), was that municipally-managed janitorial services were needed to maintain municipally-provided toilets, and that municipalities ought to take primary responsibility in managing what they deliver. Yet fieldwork from Masiphumelele revealed some of the successes of communally-managed systems and how these shifted with the advent of municipally-managed janitorial operations, the latter being introduced well after the former.

1.2 Research Question & Rationale

The central research question which drove the research for this dissertation was:

To what extent do communally-managed and municipally-managed janitor-serviced sanitation systems stimulate and/or constrain ownership of and responsibility for the municipally-provided flush toilets in the Masiphumelele Wetlands and Temporary Relocation Area?

This question derived from sanitation developments at the time the research began, around the time that local authorities embarked on a programme of implementing municipally-managed janitorial services for municipally-installed toilets in informal settlements. Such a move – subsidized by a national Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) – aimed to foster employment opportunities for informal settlement dwellers as well as extend governmental responsibility for maintaining toilets in informal areas, presaging the notion that informal settlement toilets ought to be public amenities for all in the location to use freely. Yet, this project has been beset with a range of issues² especially where various communal lock-and-key systems continue to prevail and have not been replaced by municipally-managed janitorial services.

Largely in response to being overburdened with informal settlement sanitation service delivery throughout Cape Town, authorities have increasingly been calling for residents to take ‘more ownership of and responsibility for’ what are actually publically-installed toilets. Researchers have argued that responsibilities for toilets in informal settlements need to be somehow divided between authorities and citizens (Still, Walker and Hazelton 2009; Mjoli and Bhagwan 2010; Tissington 2011), and that communally-managed systems are more practical and effective than public, open-access toilets; although both models have significant problems and are by no means mutually exclusive. However, in many South African informal settlements, communally-managed sanitation systems have

² Some of these issues, especially as relating to practices around ownership and responsibility by residents are discussed in chapter 3. Most notably, janitorial services in Masiphumelele in general have not changed the local practice of locking, controlling access and maintaining the majority of municipally-installed toilets in the Wetlands.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

appeared to fail and, increasingly, sanitation development praxis has geared itself toward public facilities and services provided and maintained by local authorities, thus reinforcing the country's pro-poor socio-economic orientation. Yet crucially, in a context where sanitation development in informal settlements cannot keep up with demand and shifting circumstances, the ways in which services are provided and maintained has to be continually revised and tailored to match particular locales. Sanitation service delivery in informal settlements therefore cannot follow simple prescriptive models. Rather it needs to be moulded according to the specifics of each area.

Given that predominant scholarly opinion is that communal sanitation in slums is the most viable means of developing access to improved sanitation (Allen and Hofman 2008; Schouten and Matenge 2010; Biran et al. 2011), what constrains and stimulates the actualization of such systems? The question as to which kinds of sanitation systems to implement in informal settlements is pressingly urgent since it is residents in these areas that are most in need of support; marginalized, vulnerable populations that constitute what have been referred to as 'poverty pockets' (Biran et al. 2011). Communal sanitation systems are increasingly being perceived as the most effective means of providing – as far as possible – safe, hygienic, dignified sanitation in informal settlements. Yet such alternatives are hindered by a plethora of social, economic, political, environmental and cultural factors.

This study is also informed by the fact that the sanitation MDGs were too ambitious and that their implementation is well behind stipulated deadlines. Perhaps more concerning, is that 'communal sanitation facilities have fallen off the agenda of the international collective effort for poverty eradication' (Schouten and Mathenge 2010:1), and that the severity of the global sanitation crisis is not being sufficiently prioritized. Notwithstanding immense challenges, as I show below, my research findings support the viability of communally-managed sanitation systems, driven and sustained by informal settlement residents, as long as there are conducive circumstances.

My research question was partially driven by a primary concern, expressed in early 2013 by a WRC manager, Jay Bhagwan, that residents, as users of public toilets, should ideally have a sense of ownership of such facilities which would lead to their keeping them clean and maintaining them (WRC 2013). Since municipally installed public toilet facilities have failed to provide adequate access in many South African informal settlements – with government largely being unable to keep up with service backlogs and maintain operational procedures – discourses around residents' ownership, responsibility, participation and collaboration have been increasingly punted by local and national sanitation authorities. This expectation was and continues to be pervasive within the context of authorities' strategies for informal settlement sanitation service delivery (COCT 2008; WSISU 2010; De Lille 2012).

Questions of ownership and responsibility are critical to the issue as they speak directly to how and why toilets are to be managed. Once sewers have been laid, toilets installed, and delivery targets met, how will the facilities be maintained and safeguarded from degradation, and remain safe, hygienic and user-friendly for local residents?

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Dubious about the efficacy of communal sanitation in informal settlements, and harried by rights-based development policies, plans and projections, the Western Cape's sanitation authorities and those in other provinces have assumed near total responsibility for sustaining sanitation in informal settlements, further increasing this load by implementing municipally-managed janitorial services via the EPWP and other schemes.

In an informal settlement context, municipalities are compelled to carry most of the responsibility in terms of maintaining public flush and other forms of sanitation. Caught between providing politically correct forms of flush toilets and extending sanitation access to as many as possible within challenging and costly circumstances, service providers struggle with actualizing their stated goal of transferring ownership and responsibility to informal settlement residents.

1.3 Research Methods

This dissertation's argument has been formulated through ethnography, the hallmark of socio-cultural anthropology, the discipline's methodological core. My ethnographic research principally comprised qualitative methods including structured/semi-structured interviews, planned and unplanned discussions, as well as participant observation – an approach that entails involving oneself in people's lives while maintaining a critical position (McClancy 2002). Ethnographic research methods allow an anthropologist to produce rich, contextualized, nuanced accounts of culture by immersing him/herself in a particular socio-cultural setting and making the research participants the focus of the research which in this case included residents, section committee members and leaders,³ janitorial staff, supervisors and managers and municipal officials. The mandate of the WRC K5/2120 contract stipulated that as wide a range as possible of stakeholders be incorporated into UCT's Urban Water Management Group's (UWMG) research. Since a broad pool of interlocutors and research themes were required for the WRC study, it became unrealistic to focus on a small group or assortment of individuals. It is also important to note here that the lines between different kinds of participants frequently blurred; all janitors were also Masiphumelele residents and some were also section committee members or leaders.

1.3.1 Research Aims

I aimed primarily to evaluate the extent to which Wetlands and TRA residents expressed a sense of ownership of and responsibility for sanitation facilities in their areas, and whether (and how) this indicated constraining and stimulating factors in the efficacy of communally managed and municipally-managed janitor serviced toilets. Specifically, I aimed to investigate the nuances and social complexities of the communally managed lock-and-key

³ The Wetlands is divided into 7 sections, each of these having what I will refer to as a 'section committee'.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

system of access organized by Wetlands residents, which operated alongside the municipally-managed janitorial services. How did these two systems operate simultaneously, what worked well and what not so well? Linked with this focus, my fieldwork was also concerned with generating data to illustrate the range of demographic complexity in the area, as well as diverse perceptions, practices and challenges relating to sanitation. Research aims included:

- To critically evaluate the current state of affairs, both on the ground and institutionally, regarding the various communal and municipal sanitation management systems in operation in the Masiphumelele Wetlands (and to compare those with sanitation management practices in the TRA and backyard areas).
- To gain an understanding of people's perceptions of, attitudes towards, and use and/or maintenance of the municipal public toilet facilities and services in the Wetlands as compared with the TRA and backyards.
- For purposes of contextualising the study, to research the history of the development of basic service provision in Masiphumelele, in particular in relation to sanitation.

1.3.2 Fieldwork Assistant

My fieldwork assistant, Vena (my age at the time, 28) was born in Umtata in the Eastern Cape and had been living in Masiphumelele for nine years when we first met. He had previously worked as a janitor in the Wetlands and was thus selected as a fieldwork assistant owing to his experience in the municipally-managed sanitation service operating in the area. He served as a local guide, a facilitator to introduce me to people and as a translator and assistant during interviews and discussions. I first met him during a walk on one of my first day's exploring the area alone. I had sat down to take a rest, greeted some men sitting on a bench in the TRA and begun chatting casually. Vena seemed initially suspicious of me, wondering why I was so inquisitive and exactly what I was doing walking around Masiphumelele in the middle of the day. Having explained that I was a Master's anthropology student from UCT, he appeared to take some interest in what I was doing, saying that he would like to know more about the study. About a week later, after a few preliminary meetings, we partnered up and began fieldwork in earnest.

Vena was paid a rate as stipulated by my supervisor, in terms of the study's budget and was clearly informed of the terms of his involvement. The number of hours I spent doing fieldwork with him varied weekly, depending on whom I had arranged to speak to, in which locations and how much time I needed to compile and transcribe field-notes or do supplementary research such as media documentation. He became an invaluable companion during my time in Masiphumelele and facilitated my interactions with people. He also set up meetings/discussions for me.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

My personal safety was also a consideration. It was, moreover, highly recommended by the UWM and Masiphumelele residents alike that I have a research assistant. Statistically, and according to local residents, the Wetlands in particular is the most dangerous part of Masiphumelele in terms of crime. Male youth unemployment and delinquency is rife and police coverage virtually non-existent. Of course, my not speaking isiXhosa, and time constraints precluding my becoming sufficiently proficient in isiXhosa to conduct research alone, meant it was necessary to have an assistant, as not all residents could speak conversational English.



Photo 1: Vena and me out on a day's fieldwork in Masiphumelele.



Photo 2: A chilly morning start to a long day's interviews. Kommetjie road is seen in the background.

1.3.3 Fieldwork Structure

My engagement with residents took the form of discussions and interviews some of which were spontaneous and others arranged. I always made research participants aware of the nature and objectives of the research and requested them to complete consent forms prior to participating. While in Masiphumelele, I worked with Vena most of the time and established clearly agreed-upon meeting places. Fieldwork took place during the daylight hours of the week (earliest 5am, latest 8pm) and included some weekend trips. Late Friday afternoons and weekends were usually avoided due to a reported high incidence of alcohol abuse and opportunistic crime.⁴

In between interviews, I held numerous discussions and chats with residents, many of whom Vena and I met on several occasions. Residents would frequently invite us to their homes to visit and were usually happy to answer

⁴ A mobile police station was opened in Masiphumelele as I was reaching the end of writing this dissertation (accessed 28 Nov 2015: <http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2015/11/20/Masiphumelele-residents-receive-long-awaited-mobile-police-station>)

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

questions and tell stories. It was also very much in the simple, everyday interactions – going to spaza shops, kicking a soccer ball with boys, having a beer with men or helping women rinse their laundry – that I learned about life in the Wetlands.

1.3.4 Research Methods

1.3.4.1. Participant observation

The hallmark of anthropology's broad-based ethnographic research approach, participant observation, involves taking part in people's lives while simultaneously keeping an evaluative disposition. This approach works to galvanize rapport and relationships with research participants and to bridge the often awkward gap between researcher and interlocutor (McClancy 2002; Liamputtong 2007)). During fieldwork I interacted with residents through activities such as playing with little kids, carting wheelbarrow loads of sand and bricks to dam up shacks after floods or assisting ladies with their laundry. I also attended local community meetings organized by Wetlands street committee leaders. Always making people clearly aware that I was a UCT student researcher, I involved myself in a range of situations and met with many different kinds of people, getting 'up close and personal', but at the same time maintaining a critical, investigative eye. Demographic information regarding the research participants I interviewed and spoke with are detailed in chapters 3, 4 and 5.

1.3.4.2. Field notes

A crucial aspect of my methods was field notes. I would write-up field notes on-site as well as after fieldwork sessions, recording specific information and details, people's opinions and remarks during discussions, observations, impressions and experiences. These notes became an indispensable means for reviewing my fieldwork encounters and especially during the write up process were invaluable for reflecting and taking myself back to the time I had spent in Masiphumelele.

1.3.4.3. Interviews and Discussions

I held numerous interviews and discussions with Wetlands residents. I also held auxiliary interviews with street committee members. I selected interviewees by first opportunistically meeting people in the streets and then asking them if they might be interested in having an interview. Having my assistant Vena with me with me also made creating contacts relatively easy as he would often get shows of interest from people whilst I was not on site. A few participants were particularly keen on taking part in the research and we visited them on several occasions for follow-up discussions or, in some cases, to complete interviews. These usually took place in residents' homes, sometimes in coffee shops or in the streets. To make comparisons and develop perspective, I also had many conversations with people in other parts of Masiphumelele from shop owners and vendors, council

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

solid waste workers and technicians, and people whom I met walking down streets on the way into the Wetlands, or at coffee shops, local eateries and shebeens, and in taxis.

The reason I have coupled interviews and discussions here is that the lines between the two research methods often became blurred. Always speaking to people with questions in mind, my question sets very frequently took completely different directions; I had to be flexible enough to 'dig deeper' into areas that were alluded to by interlocutors. Many discussions took place in social spaces relating to sanitation and hygiene particularly around the public flush toilets and standpipes, on 'stoeps' or verandas where residents kept buckets as domestic toilets and on the fringes of bush and wetland patches where men and small children urinated or defecated. Navigating the sensitivities and ramifications of research in such spaces is discussed in the ethics section.

1.3.4.4. Photography

Photography, albeit an extremely ethically challenging method given the sensitive nature of this research, was an important method that I employed. Where possible and practical, I requested permission prior to my taking photos of people at close range. I took photographs of toilet conditions as they changed over time as well as of the general natural and built environment conditions in the Wetlands and TRA as compared with other parts of Masiphumelele.



Photo 3: Laughing and chatting with some men on a bench outside a shack in the Wetlands.



Photo 4: An interviewee, Patricia, a Wetlands resident, in her home.

1.4 Ethical Considerations

As a sociological enterprise, ethnographic research practice always involves others and researchers are responsible as far as possible for ensuring that the highest standards of ethical best practice are adhered to. Anthropologists must be sensitive to the power differentials, constraints, interests and expectations characteristic of all relationships, especially when researching amongst vulnerable people (Liamputtong 2007).

Ethical considerations relating to my research aimed to align with international codes of ethics for social science research, such as the principles stipulated by the American Anthropological Association (AAA). The Ethical guidelines delineated by the AAA (2012) are as follows:

1.4.1 Do no harm

One of the most fundamental ethical responsibilities in anthropological – and for that matter any research – is to avoid are harm to dignity, and to bodily and material well-being, especially when research is conducted among vulnerable populations (AAA 2012). It was thus incumbent upon me to carefully weigh the potential consequences and inadvertent impacts my research might have had. The divide between ‘participants’ and ‘non-participants’ in research for example can unintentionally spark jealousies, mistrust and disappointment, effects that were considered and prevented as far as possible. Moreover “determinations regarding what is in the best interests of others are value- laden and should reflect sustained discussion with others concerned” (AAA 2012:2), a tenet which I followed during fieldwork.

1.4.2 Informed consent, permission and confidentiality

Gaining informed consent and ensuring confidentiality of research participants was absolutely crucial and done prior to all interviews, discussions and photographing people. According to AAA (2012:6), the consent processes should not only take place at the beginning of fieldwork, but “should be a part of project design and continue through implementation as an ongoing dialogue and negotiation with research participants”. This process involves “sharing with potential participants the goals, methods, funding sources or sponsors, expected outcomes, and anticipated impacts of the research, and the rights and responsibilities of research participants” (AAA 2012:7). With the aid of my research assistant these issues were carefully explained to all participants so as to avoid confusion, disappointment or any sense of perceived deceit. Most participants consented to having their first names used for this dissertation, although some preferred that I use pseudonyms. My assistant consented to the use of his first name.

1.4.3 Openness and honesty

Being open and honest during interactions with research participants is about being morally responsible and fostering rapport and conviviality. Transparency, like informed consent, is a process that involves “both making principled decisions prior to beginning the research and encouraging participation, engagement, and open debate throughout its course” (AAA 2012:8). Development research and initiatives are based not merely on objectives and desired outcomes, but principally on relationships between people (Mosse 2005). Openness and honesty are thus essential elements of interacting with participants. While upholding this principle was frequently challenging – for example when residents asked me to buy them supplies like gumboots, toilet paper and soap – I had to constantly remind myself of my research objectives. Being transparent and honest about the purpose of my fieldwork at all times was critical; I thus ensured that residents were repeatedly informed that I was there to conduct research under the auspices of a university and that any personal intentions or plans I might have had to assist them, in whatever way, were secondary.

1.4.4 Maintaining respectful, professional relationships

Whether working in academic or applied settings, anthropologists have a responsibility to maintain respectful relationships with others. This is not about being an anthropologist or a researcher, but about being a human being and upholding principles, actions and values that lead one to treat others in a dignified, considerate way. This attitude couples with informed consent, confidentiality, openness and honesty in ensuring ethical, aware relations with research participants.

Working in the Wetlands certainly tested this ethic, doing fieldwork amidst people in abject poverty and infringing upon residents’ lives as I made observations, talked to people and wrote field notes. Where people appeared offended by my presence I always made a point of explaining the reasons for my being there. It was essential to respect people’s privacy, both inside and outside their homes; interviews and/or discussions were curtailed if participants appeared uneasy or requested adjournment of sessions and I always took their time constraints into consideration when planning and conducting sessions.

1.4.5 Weighing ethics against effects

While political and other orientations may interfere with research, it is important to recognize that obligations to research participants are one’s primary concern (AAA 2012). Consequently, obligations to vulnerable populations are particularly important, such as informal settlement residents. The ethical obligation here was to consider the potential impact of research and the dissemination of its results. Politics deriving from inevitable processes of inclusion and exclusion were carefully monitored and I frequently requested participants to give me feedback as to

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

how people felt about me conducting fieldwork. Open mindedness, awareness and sensitivity are essential in allowing the social realities of people to inform the direction of research and guard from homogenizing representations and I made a point of reflecting at the end of each day on the effects I might have had on both participants and non-participants.

1.4.6 Accessibility and applicability of research results

The scope of collaboration, rights and responsibilities of various parties, and issues of data access and representation, credit, acknowledgment and should be openly and fairly established at the outset of any research (AAA 2012). Dissemination and sharing of research data should not be at the expense of protecting confidentiality. A key challenge was how to transpose research findings into applicable implementation strategies that would produce tangible results. Development oriented research is not only of theoretical but also of practical value. Research results should be made available to all participants and stakeholders. In this case it is my hope that my research will provide a valuable resource for further collaboration between residents and municipal officials in designing and implementing social development initiatives in the area.

CHAPTER 2

Sanitation in South African Informal Settlements and the Question of Ownership

2.1 Sanitation in South African Informal Settlements

Having inherited a massive sanitation backlog, improving access from 56% to 59% between 1994 and 2006, the ANC has since bettered access to a more recently reported 67% level (StatsSA 2012). However, delivery shortfalls and an inability to keep up with national demand – coupled with rapidly increasing populations, particularly in urban and urban townships and informal settlement areas – have resulted in the actual number of people without access to basic sanitation in South Africa being the same today as it was 20 years ago: around 17.5 million (StatsSA 2011). With now approximately 57 million people in the country, estimated to rise to 65 million by 2030 and to 84 million by 2050, and with 65% living in cities (Go et al. 2013) the urgency of delivering basic services is escalating rapidly.

Over a decade has passed since the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) set its basic water and sanitation standards and provided parameters for municipalities to provide free services to those who could not afford them, most applicably informal settlement residents (DWAF 2003). Municipal implementation of free sanitation in informal settlements has however been fraught with difficulties, resulting in provision of services that have failed to meet the government's and poor households' expectations (Taing et al. 2014). In the case of settlements such as the Masiphumelele Wetlands (and many others across South Africa) communally-managed lock-and-key systems – while representing increased control of toilets by residents – have further exacerbated the constrained access by residents to municipally-provided sanitation facilities. Consequently, municipal sanitation provision and maintenance cannot be divorced from local management practices, a point all too often overlooked within the context of informal settlements. The significance and implications of communal lock-and-key practices in the Wetlands are expounded upon in chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Provision and maintenance of sanitation services in urban informal settlements continues to constitute an extremely pressing challenge for local and national authorities (Armitage et al. 2013). One of the main reasons for this is that informal settlements are incredibly difficult to service because of a myriad geo-physical, economic, legal and socio-political factors. Researching and understanding such factors is crucial in the design and

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

implementation of service delivery initiatives, since grafting changes in human settlement cannot be divorced from attentive awareness of socio-cultural contexts and circumstances.

Sanitation provision in many South African informal settlements has tended to take the form of toilets in concrete cubicles along the edges of settlements, clustered throughout between residents' houses, sometimes alongside standpipes, or in ablution blocks offering other facilities next to toilets (Marais and Ntema 2013). In the vast majority of cases, fewer toilets are provided than there are domestic dwellings in settlements – meaning that, other than rare instances where single households have commandeered a toilet by locking it people either have to share toilets, or they have to rely on public toilets that are accessible to all, including other settlement residents, visitors and passers-by. Most commonly – and this was the case in the Masiphumelele Wetlands – where toilets are locked by residents, they are shared by several households, generating forms of communal ownership of facilities constituted and shaped by social relations and power dynamics particular to a given settlement (Taing et al. 2014).

The consequent severe scarcity of toilet facilities in relation to dense, ever-growing populations has led to filthy and dysfunctional toilets and unhygienic and inhumane sanitation conditions, which drastically impinge on the overall health and wellbeing of informal settlements residents. Nevertheless, attempts to take ownership of and responsibility for municipally-provided toilets under such circumstances have been exemplified by lock-and-key systems of sanitation access, use and maintenance, as in the Wetlands. However, exactly what forms of ownership of toilets by residents should be practised have been ambiguously outlined in policy, which is seen to have overlooked the quotidian realities of informal areas regarding factors that constrain and/or drive ownership. Authorities' expectations around sanitation ownership by local residents have, in short, not been informed by the malleable social and environmental nature informal settlements. In particular, calls for residents to collectively take ownership have been undermined by communal sanitation management which have significantly hindered universal open access through individual residents commandeering and locking toilets.

2.1.2 Sanitation Policy Development & Ownership

In 2001, the South African government adopted a policy for free basic services. As part of its initiative to implement a free basic water supply and sanitation policy, DWAF initially established a process to roll out the policy to municipalities which, as local authorities, were, and still are, primarily responsible for implementing it (Mjoli and Bhagwan 2010). The White Paper on Basic Household Sanitation (DWAF 2001) emphasized the provision of what it described as a 'basic level of household sanitation' to those areas in greatest need, namely, rural areas and urban informal settlements. Key to the White Paper was that the provision of sanitation services should be 'demand driven' and ostensibly 'community based' with, a focus on community participation – implying

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

an assumption of some sense of local ownership – and on household choice (DWAF 2001). However the permutations of such ownership have been poorly conceptualized.

DWAF, supported and assisted by other national and provincial role players, developed and launched a National Sanitation Programme in 2001. As per South Africa's MDGs, the programme aimed to eradicate the sanitation backlog in rural, urban and informal settlement areas by 2010 – a goal that has clearly not been achieved (South African Human Right Commission 2011). Since then, the national sanitation mandate has shifted to the Department of Human Settlements (DHS).

According to DWAF (2001) the overall vision for the provision of water services in South Africa is that:

1. All people living in South Africa should have access to adequate, safe, appropriate and affordable water and sanitation services, should use water wisely and should practise safe sanitation.
2. Water supply and sanitation services should be sustainable and should be provided by effective and efficient institutions that are accountable and responsive to those whom they serve.
3. Water should be used effectively, efficiently and sustainably in order to reduce poverty, to improve human health and to promote economic development.

Further, DWAF (2001) suggests the challenges to providing free basic water services are threefold:

- Infrastructure provision
- Health and hygiene promotion
- Subsidising the operating and maintenance costs

This seems promising on paper; but in reality things have not been at all straightforward. In the Western Cape, as in South Africa as a whole, since municipal sanitation and human settlements departments are largely overwhelmed by the task of providing and servicing public toilets in informal settlements (Pillay et al. 2006; Mjoli and Bhagwan 2010; Tissington 2011). Consequently, the hope that residents might clean public toilets themselves – thereby significantly reducing the pressure on sanitation service providers – has been advocated by provincial and national political and departmental authorities, at least since the inception of municipally-managed janitorial services in informal settlements beginning in 2011 (Taing et al. 2014). This hope has however thus far been shown to be difficult to realise and attempts to do so have had very mixed results Hope of residents 'involvement has, moreover and in many cases, conflicted with municipal janitorial operations.

As demonstrated by communal sanitation practices in the Wetlands which I describe below, residents have, in certain instances, taken it upon themselves to take on cleaning responsibilities relating to toilets that were initially (as well as currently) intended by the municipality for open-access and general public use. Yet there is an almost

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

ubiquitous perception amongst politicians and municipal officials that residents' ownership of and responsibility for public toilets is not occurring (Armitage et al. 2013). This has in part legitimized the implementation of municipally-managed janitorial services in informal settlements. Coupled with narratives that propose communal sanitation ownership and responsibility is a line of rhetoric asserting that informal settlement residents need to be 'educated' around 'proper' sanitation practices (DWAf 2001), a supposition both unfounded and patronising (Bliss and Neuman 2008; Taing et al. 2014).

In response to the growing severity of sanitation conditions combined with recurrent protests over sanitation service delivery (Paton 2010; Redvers 2013), the CoCT implemented a metropolis-wide janitorial service in 2012. Its Water and Sanitation for Informal Settlements Unit (WSISU) was responsible for recruiting, paying and managing janitors in informal settlements in part of what was known as the Mayor's project, financed by the EPWP; a nationwide drive to create short-term employment opportunities in a wide range of sectors for people from low-income areas. These janitors were all residents of the Wetlands and TRA, as per EPWP policy. Installing additional public flush (as well as other kinds of) toilets, and employing janitors in informal settlements, the City has made significant inroads to reducing the sanitation backlog and improving sanitation services. Of course, if the ultimate goal is to provide one toilet per household to all, municipally-managed janitorial services are a temporary intervention. However, as my dissertation illustrates, these services are presently enmeshed within a context where top-down, broad-stroke national policies dictate the implementation and maintenance of sanitation services without understanding of and tailoring to on-the-ground, local circumstances and practices regarding toilet access, use and management.

2.2 Sanitation as Dignity

Access to sanitation is considered fundamental to personal dignity and security, social and psychological well-being, public health, poverty reduction, gender equality, economic development and environmental sustainability (Mjoli et al. 2009; Chidley et al. 2010; SAHRC 2011). DWAf echoed this sentiment when it headlined its Strategic Framework for Water Services: "Water is life, sanitation is dignity" (DWAf 2003). Yet in South Africa 33% of people do not have access to basic sanitation⁵ (Water & Sanitation, Stats SA 2002-2010) as defined by the Department of Water Affairs (DWA) (2011; see below). The Bill of Rights in the Constitution of South Africa declares that "Everyone has the right (a) to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; and (b) to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures" (RSA Constitution 1996:Section 24).

⁵ This very loose definition has been poorly scrutinized given the mutable contexts of informal settlements. As indicated below, even if a given toilet is 'easily accessible', a wide range of factors might make using that toilet dangerous, unhealthy or socially unacceptable.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

The DWA defines a basic sanitation facility as the infrastructure necessary to provide a sanitation facility which is safe, reliable, private and protected from harsh weather conditions, and which is ventilated and keep foul smells to a minimum. It should furthermore minimise the risk of the spread of sanitation-related diseases by facilitating appropriate control of disease-carrying flies and pests, and enable safe and appropriate treatment and/or removal of human waste and waste water in an environmentally sound manner (Water and Sanitation, Stats SA 2002-2010:38). A basic sanitation facility is considered to be one which is easily accessible to a household.⁶ Toilet facilities of RDP standard or higher include flush toilets connected to sewerage networks or septic tanks as well, in some instances, as improved ventilated pit latrines (Water and Sanitation, Stats SA 2002-2010:38).

The Constitution, the Water Services Act (1997) and Municipal Systems Act (1998) define the government's obligations to provide basic municipal services. The Municipal Services Act's Section 73 explicitly refers to a "right to basic municipal services" and, while the Constitution does not contain an explicit reference to citizens having a right to basic sanitation, this is inferred from a number of other constitutional rights including the right of access to adequate housing, the right to human dignity and the right to a safe environment. National water and sanitation policy consistently refer to a "right to basic sanitation", closely linked to the aforementioned constitutional rights (Mjoli et al. 2009).

There is, however, confusion at and between municipal, provincial and national levels as to what constitutes access to basic sanitation (Bilchitz 2010). Current national sanitation legislation and policy does not presently provide clear guidance (Mjoli et al. 2009; Jain 2010). Institutional and financial challenges at local government level, coupled with a reported lack of political will (Stil et al. 2009), contribute to continued compromised access to sanitation for millions of South Africans. This lack of access is particularly acute in informal settlements and rural areas (Naidoo and Chidley 2009).

As some have argued, there is an absence of regulation around sanitation at all levels of government (Mjoli and Bhagwan 2010; Tissington 2011). As mentioned, the National Sanitation Programme was transferred from the DWA to the Department of Human Settlement (DHS) in 2010, a process which has caused institutional confusion over roles and responsibilities (Mjoli 2010; Paton 2010; Tissington 2011). Lack of inter-departmental communication has also had a significant impact on the developmental operations of not only water and sanitation in informal settlements, but across the board. The concerns of one department are intimately connected with those of other departments and failure to recognize these relationships and their associated ramifications have resulted in confusion, uncertainty and poorly thought-out policies and implementation strategies. Where departmental responsibilities and mandates are not sufficiently fulfilled, it is not because of a lack of development

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

principles, but rather a lack of implementing services that tangibly increase service quality and access as well as systems that might facilitate the maintenance of toilets (Taing et al. 2014).

Given this uncertain context, how might one conceptualise residents' ownership of and responsibility for municipally-provided toilets (managed both by janitorial services as well as through communal systems), particularly in the current post-apartheid milieu? This question is crucial in attempting to address the gap between policy and practice and ultimately working toward improving the quality of sanitation service provision and maintenance

2.3 Ownership of Basic Services in the Post-Apartheid Context

As outlined, it is a constitutional obligation of the South African government is to ensure that all citizens have access to basic services such as housing, water, electricity and sanitation, and to protect citizens' rights to these services (Greenstein 2006). This is particularly significant and relevant in post-apartheid South Africa where millions of people have been historically denied these services, a situation which continues as a legacy of apartheid (McDonald 2002). However, how these services should be provided, paid for and managed remains highly contested (Flynn 2003).

There has been little hesitation for municipalities to subsidise capital sanitation expenditure to support poor households' access to water and sanitation facilities, as long as users either assume on-site Operation and Maintenance (O&M) responsibilities (Mjoli 2010; McGranahan and Mulenga 2012) or pay the full or partial cost of O&M expenses (DWAF 2003; DWAF 2008) for such infrastructure. Such a position is even embedded in the Municipal Systems Act (RSA 1998). However it remains unclear precisely what 'on-site O&M responsibilities' users ought to assume.

Various responsibilities connected to providing and maintaining free basic sanitation services in South Africa have been assigned through national and municipal policy to officials and janitorial staff (Mjoli and Bhagwan 2010). Service providers have thus been given the responsibility of ensuring the delivery of sanitation services, particularly to poor households – those comprising people living in poverty – a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs; including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter and education (World Summit for Social Development 2005). Yet simultaneously those service providers have expected informal settlement residents to take on certain responsibilities: for example, that residents 'properly care for and utilize communal toilets' (DWAF 2008; de Lille 2012). However, studies by Govender et al. (2011), McGranahan and Mulenga (2012) and Taing et al. (2013) have shown that many those provided with toilets through the FBS policy expect the government to fully subsidise both capital and O&M expenditure of municipally-

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

provided toilets. They thus highlight discrepancies around the conception of ownership and ambiguity as to exactly what ownership means, what forms of ownership ought to be expressed, by whom, and the overriding legitimacy of such expectations and their implications within the precarious contexts of informal settlements in particular.

How then should ownership be conceptualized within the current context where basic services are being provided for free to people living in informal settlements and adjudged to be previously disadvantaged by apartheid? To what extent is a degree of ownership of and responsibility for toilet facilities *vis a vis* communally-managed sanitation systems manifesting amongst informal settlement residents and what constrains this? At the same time, how are residents' responsibilities affected by the simultaneous operation of municipally-managed janitorial services, and what permutations might the side-by-side running of communal and municipal sanitation systems have?

I argue that is crucial to understand the specific contexts within which attitudes and behaviours relating to ownership of and responsibility for sanitation facilities might arise, and how these are shaped and configured both by development interventions and their effects, as well as local parameters and situational dynamics. Any form of ownership of government provided public services in informal settlements should, says Chatterjee (2004 in Greenstein 2006), be conceptualized as collectivized rather than individualized. This is because the basic services in question are intended to be public and are provided to service tens of thousands of people and, if ownership and responsibility by residents does manifest, it needs to be framed analytically within the context of differing models of collective sharing of such services. Such insight is critical in the design, implementation and sustaining of sanitation provision in informal settlements. The point concerning collectivity is particularly relevant since it is within continually shifting, uncertain social milieus that communal maintenance systems need to be understood.

2.3.1 Ownership and Responsibility in Development Discourse

I now move to briefly discussing the conceptualization of ownership within international development discourse. Like 'development', 'participation' 'empowerment', and 'capacity building', 'ownership' and 'responsibility or accountability' have been major buzzwords in international development discourse since the 1990s (Cornwall 2007; Bliss and Neumann 2012). Governments and organizations involved in delivering and maintaining services like water, electricity and sanitation in developing countries have encouraged the recipients of free basic services to be more vested in the process, by taking ownership and responsibility (Lewis 1998; Fowler 2000; Bliss and Neumann 2008). Such discourse serves to construct an ideal of 'cooperation' and 'partnership' between authorities and informal settlement residents and, while this may be true to varying extents, what is important is to take into account the constraints on galvanizing residents' effective communal responsibility for toilet facilities and

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

also the closely-related challenges of improving human settlement conditions in order to facilitate such responsibility.

Some (Miraftab 2004; Pillay and Tomlinson 2006) have contended that underlying the expectation of communal accountability by informal settlement residents for municipally delivered toilet facilities represents an attempt by authorities to devolve responsibility by anticipating commitment by residents who are the beneficiaries of free basic services. More plausibly, perhaps, fiscal constraints relating to provision and maintenance of such services have been highly influential in restricting the progressive provision of sanitation services as well as the quality and accessibility of toilet facilities (McDonald and Pape 2002; Rall 2006). As service delivery backlogs become increasingly challenging, ownership and responsibility have become progressively topical in development discourse (Allison 2002; Pillay and Tomlinson 2006; Mjoli et al. 2009); moreover what they mean in particular contexts requires continual re-evaluation and rethinking as the realities of providing and maintaining basic services shift and complexify over time.

The narrative that residents who receive free basic sanitation ought to take responsibility alongside municipal service providers and janitorial services (Pillay et al. 2006; Hazelton 2009) persists. Such an idea has also been imposed by development literature as well as in national government attempts to ostensibly encourage notions of 'private/household' ownership of communal facilities (Bliss and Neumann 2008). Efforts to push informal settlement residents to take ownership of and responsibility for free basic services highlight apparent contradictions between a neoliberal agenda of devolving responsibility of such services and that of a human-rights approach to address socio-economic inequalities in contemporary South Africa (Naidoo and Chidley 2008; Tissington 2011), one that has driven the Free Basic Services (FBS) policy. This is a manifestation of the present South African development context, where progressive, liberal policies blend with retrospective, anachronistic complexes relating to 'rectifying the injustices of the past systems of oppression' (Naidoo and Chidley 2008; Tissington 2011). For the purposes of this study this has meant that communally-managed lock-and-key systems have been running alongside municipally-managed janitorial services for the same municipally-provided sanitation facilities in the Masiphumelele Wetlands; the former being the dominant model with over 80% of the toilets padlocked by local residents.

Such neoliberal thinking, and attempts to generate ownership and responsibility among informal settlements residents, while potentially constructive toward the fiscal and temporal maintenance of free basic services, need to be analysed in light of not only municipal and state imperatives but also of socio-cultural realities and residents' experiences and perceptions (Fjeldstad 2004; Miraftab 2004). Ownership should thus not be defined *a priori* and out of the social-cultural contexts in which it is expressed. Notions of ownership and responsibility around South African informal settlement sanitation might therefore be reconceptualised through rich, nuanced understandings

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

of the changing circumstances and practices of people, rather than by predeterminations. That is, informal settlement development policy ought ideally to reflect and be critically informed by the socio-economic, environmental, political realities in the particular areas that are the focus of plans and projects. Reality must inform policy and practice, a link demanding highly contextualized, locale-specific interventions derived much more from particularistic parameters than nonrepresentational, self-assuming strategies (Mosse 2005). Derived from ethnographic findings around communal and janitorial sanitation systems and practices in the Masiphumelele Wetlands and TRA (as well as backyard shacks) this dissertation offers a lens through which to examine the multi-layered circumstances of informal settlement sanitation.

2.4 Sanitation in Cape Town

I now move to outlining sanitation in Cape Town, presenting statistics which, while demonstrating the relative successes of local government in trying to provide universal sanitation access, simultaneously reveal stark discrepancies. Official statistics may paint a seemingly acceptable picture; but, as I indicate from my case study example, the immense challenges in informal settlements are glossed over and subsumed within the overall image of improved sanitation access in the city as a whole.

According to the most recent census, 88.2% of Cape Town's households have access to a flush toilet connected to a public sewer system (CoCT 2013). This statistic, while ostensibly encouraging, obscures the multiple degrees of access and quality of services for tens of thousands of people where sanitation access comes in the form of shared or communal/public toilet facilities. Official estimates are that just 8.8% of people have no access to adequate sanitation where they reside, whether or not it is a sewered system, and only 2.7% of all households have no access to any form of sanitation whatsoever (CoCT 2013). By far the greatest and most urgent need exists in the city's informal settlements, where public toilets of one kind or another are far from adequate in terms of access, health, safety, and dignity. This is illustrated below via data on the Wetlands.

Sanitation access is all too often reduced to abstract parameters through official statistics and generalising narratives, and national as well as local policy and praxis often fail to take into account the myriad factors and complexities that actually configure informal area sanitation, health, and human settlement realities. Correlating project completion and target achievement with apparent improvements in sanitation service development belies the underlying social, economic, political, historical and environmental contours and challenges of informal areas, thereby glossing over the most pressing issues and constructing a picture that suggests that 'most citizens' in Cape Town have access to basic sanitation in the form of a flush toilet on a household or at least a 'basic' level, that is, one toilet is shared by no more than five households.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Overall access to sanitation facilities in Cape Town is expressed in the following table:

Type of Toilet Facility	Total (Households)	Total Percentage
Flush toilet (connected to sewerage system)	942 589	88.2%
Flush toilet (with septic tank)	21 246	2.2%
Chemical toilet	12 341	1.2%
Pit toilet with ventilation (VIP)	2 315	0.2%
Pit toilet without ventilation	1 807	0.2%
Bucket toilet	48 510	4.5%
Other	10 699	1.0%
None	29 068	2.5%

Table 1: Cape Town Sanitation Facilities.

Source: CoCT 2011 Census – December 2012

Cape Town is well ahead of national sanitation statistics, with the Western Cape having the greatest extent of household access to basic sanitation out of all provinces. According to the most recent national census, only 58.7% of households nationally have access to flush toilets connected to public sewerage. A further 3.4% have access to flush toilets connected to a septic tank, 0.4% to chemical toilets, and 12.5% to improved ventilated pit latrines (VIPs) (Stats SA 2010). Such indicators, while positive in some senses, still fail to cast light on the wide array of types of access and quality of sanitation services. Official discourse has by-and-large overlooked the critical state of sanitation access and services in many informal settlements. Moreover, reducing sanitation access and realities to numbers can only tell us so much and, without close scrutiny and investigation, such vision does not adequately illustrate the uneven, contrasting circumstances that people face in relation to sanitation and other basic services. The ways in which officials characterise the Masiphumelele Wetlands and TRA epitomize the problems of this reductionism since they are areas where a wide range of sanitation exists and management systems operate, the betterment of which – as I argue – hinges crucially on nuanced understandings of local contexts. Before I do that I briefly outline the history and demographics of Masiphumelele. Thereafter, in the following chapters, I present, discuss and analyse my research findings.

2.5 Masiphumelele Historical Overview

Masiphumelele (isiXhosa for "let us succeed") is located in the Fish Hoek valley some 40 kilometres south of central Cape Town and roughly half way between the affluent (and primarily white) suburbs of Fish Hoek to the east and Kommetjie to the west.⁷

⁷ Scenic South. Masiphumelele UNCLEAR WHAT THIS MEANS!!!

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

In the early 1980s, some four to five hundred people, evicted by the apartheid government from their informal settlements in the Cape Flats areas of Langa and Nyanga, invaded land close to where the subsequently constructed Long Beach Mall is presently located (Bray et al. 2010; Cooper 2010). Referred to colloquially by residents as ‘Site Five’, it was one of nine sites considered for development by the then Cape Town government to house workers in the adjacent suburbs (Cooper 2010). Since then, Masiphumelele’s population has grown exponentially from several hundred in the late 1980s to approximately 8,000 in 1990, over 26,000 in 2005 and about 40,000⁸ (CoCT 2012).

In 1992, Masiphumelele was officially recognized by the then Cape Town local government after a land struggle between Masiphumelele residents and neighbouring landholders (Bray et al. 2010). Most residents then lived in shacks and additional people continued to arrive rapidly from Cape Flats townships (Middelkoop 2010). People unable to pay rent and/or secure housing as backyarders in formal dwellings moved to the informal settlement now known as the Masiphumelele Wetlands which lies along the settlement’s northern boundary between Table Mountain National Park territory, private industrial and residential property and the settlement’s formal parts.



Photo 5: Fish Hoek valley; Masiphumelele is the rectangular settlement in the centre of the picture. The False Bay coast at Fish Hoek is top left.



Map 1: Geographical location of Masiphumelele on Cape Town’s southern peninsula. (Source: www.uctscholar.ac.za)

⁸ The population has in all likelihood grown since 2012, but since this the most recent official figure it will be used as a working figure for remaining chapters.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

2.6 Masiphumelele Demographics and Human Settlement

Living conditions in Masiphumelele vary extensively. About 75% of the population live in formal dwellings – brick and mortar houses and tenement flats– while 25% live in informal dwellings (i.e. shacks) in backyards and informal settlements (CoCT 2012). Houses built by the municipality (typically brick-and mortar dwellings) are generally situated on a single plot of land. They house about 13,000 residents, 32.5% of Masiphumelele’s population (CoCT 2011). On some such plots backyarders have leased shacks or outside rooms that extend from the formal houses. Numbers of backyard shacks and rooms on each plot of land differ from one to up to ten dwellings, accommodating about 16,000 people (CoCT 2011). The majority of informal dwelling residents reside in the Wetlands – home to some 10,000 people – with the remaining such residents (an estimated 1,000) living in the TRA, an area serving as a transit area for residents on the City’s housing waiting list. They are there after moving from the Wetlands to the neighbouring TRA (these being neighbouring settlements), and then, potentially, to flats or houses in formal areas of Masiphumelele.



Photo 6: Masiphumelele TRA Children play in the streets.



Photo 7: Masiphumelele Wetlands. Women carry water from standpipes alongside a canal heavily clogged with waste.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder



Photo 8: A formal part of Masiphumelele showing both RDP houses and backyard shacks



Photo 9: A RDP house with five backyarders' dwellings on a single plot of land.

The CoCT's (2013), estimate of 10,000 Wetland residents is probably an undercount since the number is constantly increasing as people from various other areas in Cape Town, from the Eastern Cape, and from other African countries (notably Zimbabwe, Malawi and Somalia) swell the settlement. As in many informal settlements, Wetlands land is rent-free and, while space is extremely limited, the settlement offers people a chance to live close to surrounding affluent areas where employment might be sought. Masiphumelele Wetlands has evolved over time into mazes of narrow footpaths between shacks, with four concrete canals, having been constructed by municipal officials, diverting and draining runoff stormwater to the actual wetland alongside. There are no paved roads, though parts can be accessed by motor vehicles at open areas adjacent to the canals and at the far west and east ends of the area. In contrast, dwellings in the TRA are easily accessible via wide dirt and gravel roads.

Almost all areas throughout the Fish Hoek valley have access to electricity, basic sanitation, schools and healthcare facilities. However, "the spatial impress of apartheid remains" (Seekings et al. 2010:45), and the majority of local coloured and black African people in the valley live within the narrow confines respectively of Ocean View and Masiphumelele, while the richer, predominantly white residents live in the affluent suburbs and smallholdings that have developed across the area, from one coast to the other. In the Fish Hoek valley "apartheid has fostered not only racial residential segregation, but also racial economic inequalities" (Seekings et al. 2010:56). Such inequalities are glaringly apparent in the Wetlands since barely a stone's throw away from the edge lie luxurious homesteads.

Based on interviews with the local ward councillor, Felicity Purchase, it seemed unlikely that the Wetlands will be developed as a long-term housing development (Fieldwork 2013). Nonetheless, given the limited amounts of low-

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

income housing options, it has been critical for CoCT officials to continue providing free basic water and sanitation services in places like the Wetlands until residents are housed in alternative, long-term accommodation. In the Wetlands much remains to be done in terms of the provision of basic service to meet municipally-stipulated standards. Of course the provision of basic services does not happen overnight and remedial measures inevitably develop to address shortfalls. The Masiphumelele case illustrates examples of such measures.

The next chapter discusses resident-driven communally-managed sanitation systems since the installation of flush toilets in the Wetlands as well as municipally-initiated janitorial services in the Wetlands and TRA. It also looks at the constraints to and relative successes of these systems. Such data serve to demonstrate a wide range of nuances associated with communal sanitation management practices and the intricacies of the social relations that constitute and sustain these systems. In addition, the findings point to the importance of understanding on-the-ground circumstances and the socio-historical processes underlying them in the design and implementation of informal settlement sanitation development.



Map 2: Masiphumelele Area map. The Wetlands informal settlement is outlined in red and the TRA in green. The affluent areas of Lake Michell and Noordhoek are at the top of the map (Source: Google Maps)

CHAPTER 3

Communal and Municipally-Administered Janitor-Managed Sanitation in the Wetlands

This chapter presents, discusses and analyses data regarding the communal sanitation management systems and municipally-managed janitorial services in the Wetlands and their constraints and successes. I pay particular attention to Wetlands residents’ perceptions about and expressions of ownership and responsibility, the nuanced ways in which residents arranged and sustained communal access and cleaning systems, as well as the obstacles to and benefits and drawbacks of such practices. Residents’ ownership of and responsibility for toilet facilities took multiple forms and were perceived in range of ways by residents.

3.1 Sanitation in the Wetlands

3.1.1 Wetlands Flush Toilets by Section

There are 132 municipally-installed flush toilets (roughly one per 76 persons and 17 households) in the Wetlands. They are located predominantly on the edges of the settlement where sewers have been laid and can be accessed by municipal vehicles. However, their positioning makes access extremely inconvenient and unsafe at night for residents, especially those living farthest away from the toilets, those not holding keys to locked toilets (see below), children, and the elderly and disabled. The toilets were built between September 2010 and February 2011 by the CoCT. From what local people told me, prior to this, Wetlands residents made use of a range of sanitation facilities including porta-potties, household buckets, flush toilets in the TRA and backyards and public toilets in formal Masiphumelele. Open urination and defecation were also prevalent and, as observed during fieldwork, remain so.

The following table shows the different ‘sections’ within the Wetlands, the total numbers of flush toilets and the number of locked and unlocked toilets respectively in each, as well as the number of standpipes. The toilets in all sections are laid out in rows of varying numbers of single toilet cubicles; Zulu Section (2 rows: 6 & 6), Z Section (3 rows: 15, 8 & 12); A Section (2 rows 7 & 7); B Section (1 row: 5); C Section (1 row: 7); D Section (4 rows: 4, 5, 6, 8,); E Section (2 rows: 18 & 18).

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Section	Total number of toilets	Number of locked toilets	Number of standpipes	Number of dwelling units	Ratio of dwelling units per toilet	Ratio of residents per toilet
Zulu	12	10	1	250	21:1	92:1
Z	35	35	2	350	10:1	44:1
A	14	2	2	370	26:1	125:1
B	5	3	1	330	66:1	260:1
C	7	5	0	250	36:1	170:1
D	23	20	3	380	17:1	71:1
E	36	35	2	360	10:1	42:1
Total:	132	120	11	2290	17	76:1

Table 2: Flush toilets and standpipes in the Wetlands.

Source: Fieldwork.

CoCT's Water and Sanitation Department (CoCT 2011) records that close to 80% of Masiphumelele's residents have access to basic sanitation; that is, that those 80% are all able to access a public toilet on a one toilet per five households basis. The remaining 20%, CoCT (2011) reports, have access to essential sanitation; meaning more than five households share one toilet. Such statistics are grossly inaccurate – considering the ratios presented in the above table – and give little indication regarding the starkly differing levels of access to public toilets. With 2,290 households and 132 flush toilets, on average one toilet is shared by approximately 17 households, more than three times the City's WSD's stipulated ratio of one toilet to five households for basic sanitation provision – a ratio that would require 458 toilets in the Wetlands. Moreover, the toilets are not accessible to all residents on a public, open-access basis.

This is because of a lock-and-key system that various section committees and residents have developed since the toilets were installed (see sections 3.1.4; 4.1; 4.2; 4.3; 4.4 & 4.5). Residents explained that the system was initiated in mid to late 2010 and applies to 110 of the Wetlands' 132 toilets, the remaining 22 being unlocked. In addition I observed and had reported to me various other forms of sanitation practice, including use of buckets, open defecation and urination and, in a few cases, use of porta-potties.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town
Matthew Schroeder

I now present a discussion of the recent four to five year history of municipally-provided communal sanitation in the Wetlands; beginning with various volunteer cleaning systems that predated lock-and-key systems. I then consider the lock-and-key system after which I discuss the City's municipally-managed janitorial services. Sketching the history of these practices contextualizes the development of the prevailing lock-and-key systems. It also offers insight into the complex nature of sanitation access and the constraints on it in the settlement.



Photo 10: C section toilets.



Photo 11: D section toilets.



Photo 12: Z section toilets.



Photo 13: Zulu section toilets

Before describing that history, however, it is necessary to clarify what constituted the three forms of toilet maintenance systems that were found, at various times, in the Wetlands. The first is what I call a volunteer cleaning system, arranged by local residents in ways that I describe below. The second is a lock-and-key system that resulted in municipally-installed toilets being commandeered and individually locked with keys held by a set of households. This kind of arrangement was occasionally organised by municipal officials, more often by them collaborating with local leaders or by those leaders working independently, and sometimes by residents acting independently or in groups to commandeer a toilet for their exclusive use. The third is a municipally-managed and paid-for janitorial service through which sets of janitors were appointed from among local residents to keep municipally-installed public/communal toilets clean and to ensure that they were properly maintained.



Photo 14: A section toilets.



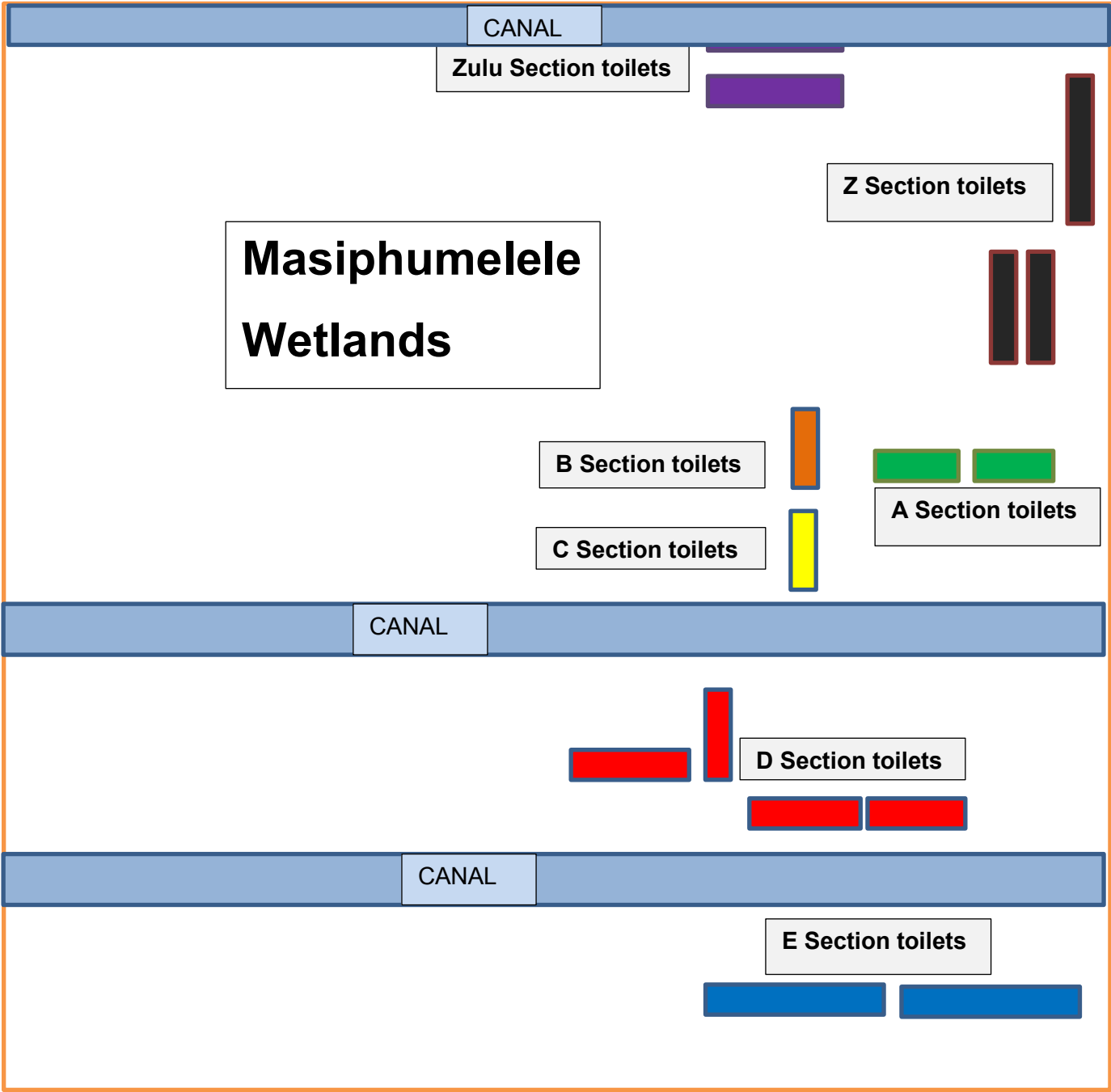
Photo 15: B section toilets.



Photo 16: E section toilets.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town
Matthew Schroeder



Map 3: Diagrammatic representation of Wetlands Flush Toilets by Section. The wetland (part of Table Mountain National Park) lies to the left of the diagram. Pokela road (permitting O&M vehicle to access the Wetlands toilets) runs along the far right of the diagram.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

3.1.2 Communally Managed Sanitation

When flush toilet facilities were initially provided by CoCT to informal settlements, there was an intention to provide one toilet to sets of five households within close proximity to each other. Users of toilets (sometimes described as “beneficiaries”) were expected to be responsible for keeping them “clean and hygienic”, and the municipality was to be “responsible for repairs and maintenance of the facility” (WSISU 2010:2). According to WSISU, these broadly defined O&M responsibilities were stipulated as being applicable to local residents as regards any municipally provided sanitation facilities in informal settlements (WSISU 2010).

These intended roles, as envisioned, suggested a ‘community-managed toilet model’ in which the municipality was to cover the capital costs of providing services as well as maintenance costs, while users were expected to manage on-site tasks such as everyday cleaning and basic maintenance. Yet nowhere was it specified what exactly such duties are meant to entail, nor were site-specific circumstances thoroughly considered. Prior to the inception of municipal sanitation management services (that is, municipal janitorial services), informal settlement residents have in many instances (as in the Masiphumelele Wetlands and TRA cases) taken it upon themselves to orchestrate communally-led toilet maintenance models. This is discussed in the following section.

A massive disparity continues to exist between the way O&M responsibilities are imagined by municipal officials and how these are negotiated and expressed by informal settlement residents (Taing et al. 2014). Interviewed WSISU officials explained that responsibility for toilets in informal settlements was, in many instances, handed over to those whom they described as ‘community leaders’ – usually members of local section committees whom officials expected to consult with and represent residents. Such transfers of power and connected ramifications relating to local sanitation management are addressed in the following chapters.

In the Wetlands, as I show below, responsibility for the facilities first took the form of a volunteer cleaning system organised by local leaders and where all toilets remained unlocked. This was superseded by lock-and-key systems where the majority of toilets were commandeered and locked by smaller and larger sets of households, thereby significantly restricting access for many. Yet the process simultaneously revealed a willingness by at least some local residents to take ownership of, and responsibility for cleaning units within the facilities and in the absence of municipally-managed janitorial services or any other municipal initiatives.

3.1.3 Volunteer Toilet Cleaning

For some six to ten months after the Cape Town municipality had installed flush toilets in the Wetlands late in 2010, they were not serviced by municipal janitors; this began only in September 2011. Prior to a municipally-

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

managed janitorial service being implemented, section committee members and residents told me, an informal system had existed in which householders had paid ‘volunteers’ – Wetlands residents and ostensibly organised by section committee leaders – to clean some of the toilets. Without municipal cleaning services, residents and section leaders had realized the importance of keeping the toilets clean, especially given that there were just 132 toilets being used by 8,000 to 9,000 people in the Wetlands at the time. Despite residents’ and leaders’ best intentions – and the hope of keeping all toilets open for all to use – volunteer cleaning systems failed, for the most part because of the immense challenges of sharing and maintaining the scarce facilities in relation to the total population and natural and built environment conditions.

I was told that section leaders had appointed residents to be responsible for cleaning the Wetlands’ toilets, typically cleaning toilets in the section where they lived, or in a section located close to their residences, and were compensated by the respective section committee leaders who collected donations from residents willing to support the initiative. Residents generally donated R2 to R5 per week to run the system. However not all residents donated and, leaders explained, many said they could not afford to donate or else preferred not to. Moreover it was logistically challenging for leaders to ask for and collect money from over 2,000 households. Interviewed residents said that their donations depended on how well section committee leaders had explained the volunteer cleaning system to them and on the commitment of ‘volunteers’. The amounts paid also depended on whether householders had (or thought they had) enough money to spare for this purpose. The money collected was then used to cover costs of cleaning materials and to pay ‘volunteers’ who reportedly earned somewhere between R50 and R150 per week.

‘Volunteers’ were, however, reportedly hard to find since people saw the job as degrading. Moreover, convincing people to pay others to clean their toilets was apparently difficult particularly since, as most residents asserted, it was the municipality’s responsibility to service the facilities. Furthermore, the logistics of monitoring volunteers and ensuring that they actually cleaned the toilets was very challenging, given the system’s informality and that there was no consensus regarding how such supervision should be structured or who should take up supervisory roles to organize the system.

These disorganized, loosely managed volunteer cleaning systems soon proved ineffective, and residents and local leadership quickly began considering an alternative in the form of a lock-and-key system (elaborated upon in subsequent sections). It began a few months later. Nevertheless the volunteer system’s existence points to initial willingness, by at least some Wetlands residents, to take communal ownership of and responsibility for municipally installed flush toilets in their area, at least in the absence of municipally-managed janitorial services. Volunteer cleaning operations thus marked the formative stages of communal toilet management by Wetlands

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

residents, despite its being superseded by a far more the organized lock-and-key model of sanitation facility management.

3.1.4 The Origins of Communal Lock and Key Sanitation Management

Residents explained that section committee leaders initiated, through gatherings with residents, to arrange locks and keys (generally 3 per padlock) for some Wetlands toilets. According to section leaders this process began around mid-2011, emerging from a series of meetings held between the leaders and those residents who knew about the tentative plans and were able to attend the meetings. I was told that the meetings were held generally twice a week over a period of about a month in some of the few open spaces in the Wetlands, such as a courtyard used for soccer. Notice of the meetings was spread by word of mouth, it being the responsibility of leaders to tell residents in their sections. Attendance varied, with numbers reportedly ranging from 100 to 500 residents.

Toilets were meant to be allocated to households by committee leaders in order for those households to have and control access to specific padlocked toilets. Some committee members and residents told me that the idea was to lock no more than half the 132 toilets and to keep the remainder open for all Wetlands residents to use; yet the logic behind this principle was not clearly comprehended and almost all the toilets – 110 to be precise – were soon locked. Household representatives that attended meetings were requested by committee leaders to put money together to buy locks (generally R20 to R40 each). Though I could find no written documentation of such arrangements, residents and section leaders noted there was an understanding between both parties that the former would manage the allocation of toilets to be locked while the latter would manage the logistics of buying locks and cleaning supplies and maintaining toilets. Already at this stage municipal expectations of ‘basic daily maintenance of sanitation facilities’ were being exceeded, characterized by organized modes of access control by residents and committee leaders who took the initiative to do so.

In reality, however, such delegation of responsibilities did not transpire as planned and, in the absence of organized leadership (as well as the challenges of meeting with all households and allocating them to toilets), in many instances residents took it upon themselves to commandeer unlocked toilets, and then to lock and share them with relatives and/or friends. Such residents were generally those who had not attended (or known about) meetings and/or were not included in initial household/toilet allocations. Residents also began cutting duplicate keys from originals so that more than the original three households would have access to particular locked toilets. I observed only a few cases where the original three keys were shared by just three households. Due to the limitations of short-term fieldwork in the Wetlands it was impossible to investigate all sharing groups; nevertheless, a central theme was that of the continually shifting, negotiable networks of relationships between residents around

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

communal toilet management, and the ways in which these to a large extent shaped sanitation maintenance practices in the settlement.

Many residents explained that they had had no idea about the initial meetings or what they were for and could not understand why toilets were suddenly being locked. Those who did attend the meetings said they had been quite disorganized and poorly facilitated; that it had been difficult to get viewpoints from so many people; that residents had argued with each other and wasted time; and that there was no clear structure to the meetings or specific criteria for allocating toilets to groups of households other than that they had to live in the same section. A group of old men I chatted to one afternoon told me that they remembered watching the proceedings at one such meeting. Within minutes, they said, residents had begun shouting at each other and making accusations about being selfish and greedy, leading some residents and even committee leaders to storm off making it well-nigh impossible to know exactly what was going on. When there were fewer attendees however, these men explained, meetings ran more smoothly.

Understanding why and how lock-and-key communal systems began and have been sustained in the Wetlands is central to consideration of the circumstances relating to the development of sanitation management and the range of challenges residents faced. One section committee leader explained the complex nature of initially setting up lock-and-key systems as follows:

After some time, we (Wetlands section committee leaders) came together to talk about putting locks on the toilets here. We knew we had to do something, 'cos the toilets were always very dirty and really bad, you know. But trying to manage this was so hard; we could not speak to everyone here, and many were not at all happy about this system of locks and keys. We began telling people who did come to those meetings that they could lock some toilets and then slowly others also did the same. We wanted at first to keep lots of toilets open for anyone to use ... we said: two or three in each section, maybe more for a section with more toilets like E section. But, ja, it was really very difficult, there was lots of fighting between leaders and people here and we did not get so much help from councillors so we couldn't control really who put locks on toilets. (George – B-section committee leader).

Discussions with section leaders did not clarify exactly to what extent municipal authorities had been (if at all) involved in initiating the system. Leaders explained that preliminary meetings had been held with ward councillors to discuss the issue – driven by concerns by local leadership – and that councillors said it was the responsibility of committee leaders to arrange locks and keys as well the allocation and logistics. Yet leaders argued it was unrealistic of councillors to expect them to use their own money to buy locks and consequently (as mentioned earlier) they encouraged residents to do so. As George explained to me, initially only a few toilets in each section were intended to be locked. Yet keeping control over this was almost impossible and, as pointed out, residents

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

gradually began arranging between households to lock more and more toilets. In many ways, they said, they could understand residents' motives – being residents themselves – and realized the imperatives behind attempting to secure toilets with locks in order to keep the facilities as safe and clean as possible in the absence of municipally-managed janitorial services. In some senses it could be said that Wetlands residents who had commandeered toilets and were part of household sharing groups had appointed themselves to take on janitorial responsibilities; at least in terms of regular maintenance of locked toilets. Yet this extended further to encompass access control via padlocks, independent purchasing of cleaning materials, the choice to lend keys or allow access to those outside of sharing groups, and potential to expand or contract the number of people and households constituting a sharing group making use of a single locked toilet. These elements combined to manifest in nuanced, complex ways and typified Wetlands communal sanitation management.

The ways in which residents set up and sustained household groups to share and maintain locked toilets, lent keys and thus extended sharing, as well the concomitant range of expressions of ownership of and responsibility for the sanitation facilities are described and illustrated with detailed examples in chapter 4.

A year after the municipality begun constructing public flush toilets in the Wetlands, a municipally-managed janitorial service was implemented in the Wetlands as well as the TRA. By this time Wetlands residents had already implemented and sustained their own forms of communal management of the said sanitation facilities; first a volunteer cleaning system and then lock-and-key systems, the latter remaining dominant in spite of the municipally-provided janitorial service. A crucial implication of this simultaneous existence of toilet maintenance systems was that service providers appeared to lack an understanding of the multiple factors influencing the already established local sanitation management practices in the Wetlands. This contributed to the limited impact of municipal, janitorial services in the settlement, since it was implemented in a context where communal sanitation maintenance practices had long constituted not just toilet cleaning systems, but ways of taking ownership and responsibility, moulded by site-specific circumstances.

3.2 Municipally-managed janitorial Services

As part of a metropolis wide move to improve sanitation services in Cape Town city's informal settlements, municipally-managed janitorial services commenced in the Wetlands and TRA in September 2011 and remained operational throughout my fieldwork in Masiphumelele. During that time between eight and twelve janitors were employed by WSISU. The janitors usually worked in teams of four to five, each team roving the Wetlands and TRA to clean toilets. Janitors typically worked from 09:00 to 16:00 Monday to Friday. Job vacancies were advertised on notice boards in the Masiphumelele community hall and contracts signed at the Water and

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Sanitation department offices in Bellville. The janitors were hierarchized in a team of eight, being supervised by a young man, Thembelani, who oversaw daily tasks and reported to municipal sanitation authorities regarding technical faults and overall janitor operations. There was also a janitorial manager, Josh, who was in charge of transporting cleaning equipment and supplies each day. Equipment and supplies were however also sometimes stored at janitors' homes, especially when Josh was unable, because he was also responsible for delivering equipment to four other informal settlements in the southern peninsula, to make it in time for a shift's start. He generally delivered supplies to Masiphumelele in the morning and then went off to other areas; he was thus rarely on site for the full duration of any working day. This also meant that he was not available to oversee janitorial duty completion or onsite supervision of tasks.



Photo 17: Male Masiphumelele Janitors. Josh the manager is centre first row with Thembelani, the supervisor right centre row.



Photo 18: Female janitors servicing toilets in Wetlands E section. Notice the cleaning roster arranged by residents on the cubicle wall.

The consequent lack of consistent management meant that janitors made decisions around where and when to clean toilets on their own and their work patterns frequently altered. I observed that the janitors spent most of their working hours in the TRA. They explained that this was because all the TRA toilets were unlocked and that working conditions were better than in the Wetlands since there was easier access to running water, a smaller area to work in and toilets in far better states as compared to the Wetlands. I describe conditions in the TRA, and how they were more amenable for the janitors than in the Wetlands, in section 5.2.

Coupled with a lack of municipal leadership, the Masiphumelele Wetlands and TRA municipal janitors also faced a range of operational challenges. Protective waterproof gear for wet weather was not provided to them, which meant that very often they would not work during rainy periods. Walking around with the janitors while performing their duties, I observed them frequently retreating to their homes when it began to rain; particularly since it was winter in Cape Town. Even when it was not raining, downpours left ground around toilets soaked and in some

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

places flooded in up to half a metre of water, making access to toilets difficult for janitors. They would remark how important it was for them to have gumboots to deal with such conditions, but these were also not provided for them. The naturally high water table in the Wetlands further exacerbated the challenge of working in drenched parts of the settlement during winter. A grievance about this situation was expressed to the management team of Thembalani and Josh, although both men told me that while they sympathized with the janitors' plight, there was precious little they could do. The supply of rain and protective gear was up to the municipality's WSISU whose officials argued that it was beyond their budget to provide equipment like rain suits and gumboots to all janitors, especially given that janitors were employed on a short-term basis through the EPWP programme that employed workers for just three months at a time.

Beyond issues around lack of equipment, a major challenge to the municipally-managed janitorial service in the Wetlands was gaining access to locked toilets. This was retroactively attempted by the janitors in that they tried to gain access to locked toilets well after they had been commandeered and locked by residents – but they had had mixed and only partial success. Having been initiated six months after the lock-and-key system began, the municipally-managed janitorial service was implemented in an environment where 110 out of 178 toilets in the Wetlands and TRA combined were locked. I now turn to this concern. The municipal janitors were responsible for servicing municipally-installed flush toilets in both the Wetlands and TRA; however due to prevailing communally-managed lock-and-key systems in the Wetlands, restricted access to padlocked toilets significantly limited to impact of janitorial operations. It was within this context that both local and municipal sanitation maintenance and management models during fieldwork took place and were continually negotiated and perpetuated through social relations and various degrees of resident ownership.

3.2.1 Arranging Access to Locked Toilets

Despite the daily challenges (see below) that municipal janitors experienced in gaining access to locked toilets, I observed cases where both janitors and residents collaborated in mutually organizing access to and cleaning of locked toilets. For example, in Wetlands' B and C sections, a group of three women – who collectively kept keys to fifteen toilets – opened these toilets during the day for janitors to clean. These women – all close friends – told me that they had arranged amongst themselves to purchase locks for three toilets, each of which they each shared with neighbours in their sections. They usually stayed at home during the day and, once the municipally-managed janitorial services had begun, they explained, other residents they knew in B and C sections had given them their own toilet-lock keys during the day so they could open up their toilets for janitors to clean. I spoke to some such residents who described how, because they were busy during the day at work and trusted the three ladies, they had no problem leaving their keys with them and then collecting them when they got back from work.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Most of these were residents who said they had not been originally allocated toilets by committee leaders but had instead organized to purchase padlocks for a commandeered toilet and to share communal cleaning tasks themselves. In some cases, such residents were related to one another or were friends; in other cases, they said, they had come to know each other through the imperative of sharing a locked toilet with households whose sites were typically quite close to, albeit not necessarily direct neighbours of each other. The women explained that they told the janitors they would open the toilets for them to clean and that they could come around whenever they had time, notifying them of where they lived. Interactions were observed to be cordial amongst both parties and the women would always thank the janitors and wish them well.

In another instance I saw a group of women washing clothes who, when janitors came around, opened locked toilets for which they held keys. However, they said, janitors did not come to clean every day, being absent particularly when it was raining heavily. These women also said that they had arranged to buy locks and organize cleaning tasks amongst themselves without committee leaders having been involved. I observed these women keeping a watchful eye over the janitors as they serviced the toilets and, once they had finished, the ladies instructed the janitors to lock the cubicles. They further explained that the janitors lightened their cleaning tasks and this also meant they could save money on detergents. They explained that they had requested janitors to come either early morning or late afternoon since they were usually out during the day. However, they said, the janitors came only twice or three times weekly, and this, they said, irritated them.

One morning I saw some of these ladies scold the municipal janitors for not coming to clean in the morning and for having arrived late. In their defence, Pinky, one of the janitors, replied that they had been busy in the TRA and that two janitors were sick and so progress had been slow. The ladies concerned were having none of it and scorned the janitors for not doing their job. In a follow up discussion the ladies said the janitors had subsequently begun arriving on time more often, but were still often late. Siphokazi, another janitor, said it was unfair to be expected to arrive at specific times at certain locked toilets because they could not anticipate how long they would take to clean unlocked toilets and how weather would affect their work.

As I observed the situation, janitors did make efforts to initiate negotiations with residents around opening locked toilets and managed, in many instances, to ascertain where key-holding residents lived. They also tried to organize times when they could clean. They did this by speaking to people as they worked and that way being told when they could come to clean toilets to which residents held keys. Those residents with whom they did organize cleaning times generally received them well and said they were pleased to have municipally-managed janitorial services.

The examples above illustrate how in some cases municipally-managed janitorial services became enmeshed to varying degrees with communal lock-and-key systems, where forms of reciprocity regarding accessing and

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

cleaning locked toilets took place and were continually negotiated and in flux. It must be again remembered that all municipal janitors in the Masiphumelele Wetlands and TRA were also residents of different parts of Masiphumelele, a factor which both facilitated and in some instances strained interaction with local residents, particularly key-holders involved in setting up cleaning arrangements with janitors. Notwithstanding some of the more workable aforementioned cases, the dilemma of maintaining the 110 locked toilets in the Wetlands constituted a major constraining factor for the municipal janitorial services. At the same time, the prevailing predominance of communally-managed lock-and-key systems in the Wetlands continued to epitomize local brands of responsibility and ownership of municipally-provided toilet facilities.

Gaining regular access to the keys on a daily basis was fraught with challenges for janitors since many key-holding residents were not always home when janitors came around to clean, and because some residents were reluctant to leave their keys with janitors or other residents who might then pass keys on to janitors. Such residents said that municipally-managed janitorial services were a new addition and expressed concern that there was no guarantee their keys would be returned. Another constraining factor was that, as mentioned, Josh, the manager, was rarely on site because of commitments he had in other settlements; which meant that he had no time to organize such coordination. Josh explained how he had asked a few key-holding residents about cutting keys for janitors but that various residents resisted because, they said, they might never get their keys back. Josh added that, while he wanted to improve the efficacy of the municipally-managed janitorial service, it was extremely difficult considering there were so many people to speak to and that he simply did not have the time. He told me that, if he could have done so, he would definitely have made arrangements with all residents holding keys to locked toilets in order to clean them on a daily basis; but that had not proved possible.

A further constraint on janitors' attempts to gain access to locked toilets was that the janitors asserted they were not paid sufficiently to do this and that it was a complicated task so should not be added to their job descriptions. This is despite the example described above where some janitors and residents did collaborate to have locked toilets serviced. As a result of coordination challenges, janitors generally skipped over locked toilets. Thembelani, the janitorial supervisor at the time, told me of his frustrations with trying to coordinate with residents.

We are really trying to speak to the people here and asking them to open the toilets for us during the day so we can clean them. But ey, it's very difficult. We have a lot of work to do and it's hard for us to speak to all the people who have locks to these toilets. Sometimes we find one person who has a key and they open for us, but then another person also with a key will lock that toilet and then we cannot continue cleaning. It's very difficult and we just don't have the time or the ways whereby we can speak to people to organize these things.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Thembelani told me that residents often gave him general times when the janitors could come and service locked toilets but that, when they arrived, those toilets were very often still locked. When he and his team attempted to ask around for key-holding residents they found that people either did not know who had keys or, if they did, told janitors that those residents were not home. Thembelani said that it was too time-consuming to have to then track down keys as his main duty was to ensure janitors continued roving the Wetlands and TRA to clean unlocked toilets. Accessing the locked toilets on a daily basis was fraught with challenges that Thembelani indicated were outside his capacity to address. The aforementioned issues illustrate the complications of having two sanitation management systems – one communal in the sense that a few residents came together, the other municipal – running simultaneously, particularly in the Wetlands context where communal lock-and-key systems had been in place for a year prior to the inception of municipal janitorial services. Retroactive attempts by janitors were largely ineffective and consequently the majority of their work was focused on the TRA toilets.

Coupled with this historical layering of sanitation management models, lack of leadership and proper municipal coordination added to the general inefficacy of the janitorial service in the Wetlands. There were, however, positive aspects to the service; with residents expressing mixed opinions that assist in illustrating the ways in which the janitorial model was perceived and experienced. I now move to looking at some of these perceptions.



Photo 19: Nesizwa cleaning an unlocked toilet in Z section.



Photo 20: Thembelani radioing WSISU to report on janitorial progress and any blockages or technical faults.

3.2.2 Residents' Perceptions

Over the course of a week of fieldwork I polled 100 residents⁹ throughout the Wetlands about their general perceptions of the municipally-managed janitorial service. 54 said they were satisfied with the janitors' efforts, explaining that they were doing a good job despite trying circumstances. 26 said they were dissatisfied and thought that the municipal janitors should have been doing more to clean locked toilets and that they should also have cleaned all toilets during weekends. The remaining 20 had mixed opinions or were ambivalent on the issue, explaining that they saw the janitors so rarely that they could not speak positively or negatively about their performance.

While many residents appreciated the janitors' efforts, others were not completely convinced of the efficacy of the municipally-managed janitorial services, directing their frustrations not at the janitors but at the municipal authorities. Many expressed a generic idea, paraphrased here as, 'Great, now the government is employing people to clean the toilets; but what we really need is more toilets, better, safer and more accessible services'. As one young man commented:

Eish, the government are just playing with us here, with these janitors man. They think that by them putting these janitors here in the Wetlands that they are doing us some kind of favour...but actually I think they are just pretending. Most of the toilets here are locked...you see...so what is the use of having janitors here to clean those few toilets that are unlocked? If they really want to do something then they must give us proper houses, more toilets and better services, and not keep playing games here with us. (Sive, 30 year-old entrepreneur).

While people expressed dissatisfaction, ambivalence or relative contentment with the janitors' work, numerous residents said the system did little to address the broader issues relating to sanitation. Residents told me the janitors could only do so much; that they were not available to clean in the evenings or weekends, were ineffective when it rained or when toilets were dysfunctional; and lacked organized supervision, especially as regards coordinating and communicating with residents. As expressed by Sive in the comment quoted above, grievances around the janitorial service were largely subsumed within broader frustrations concerning other basic services, including of course the desperate need for many more toilet facilities. Had the janitors hypothetically speaking gained access to all toilets and kept them in spotless condition on a daily basis, the reality of a severe lack of toilets – along with issues around proximity to toilets and safety concerns - would have remained.

⁹ 50 male, 50 female; age 15-25 (20); age 25-35 (20) ; age 35-45 (20); age 45-55 (20); age 55-65 (20)

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Elizabeth, a mother of four children in E section said that janitors should have done more to engage residents to be able to clean locked toilets. She queried the usefulness of having municipally-managed janitorial services provided if they were unable to figure out how to gain access to locked toilets. She also said she understood the difficulties the municipal janitors faced, adding that the enormous challenges of maintaining toilets in the Wetlands should not be the sole responsibility of janitors and residents. Local people (janitors included according to EPWP policy) certainly had a role to play but contended that ultimately municipal, provincial and national authorities were responsible in the first instance for providing adequate services. Elizabeth argued that had there been more toilets spatially distributed throughout the Wetlands and not confined to one side of the settlement, there would probably have been no need for a municipal janitorial service, since the communal lock-and-key systems had been running effectively for over a year. This is however a matter of conjecture; but it points importantly to the extent to which communal toilet management systems had taken root in the Wetlands and configured municipally-provided sanitation-facility maintenance by local residents.

Despite being well-intentioned, the presence of municipally-managed janitorial services in the Wetlands and TRA exemplified reluctance, particularly by key-holding Wetlands residents, to give up their responsibilities in controlling access to and maintaining locked toilets. Municipal janitorial staff and supervisors were largely unable to impact such practices, predominantly due to the determination of key-holding residents to maintain control of locked toilets but also due to logistical issues around coordinating regular unlocking and cleaning as well as the reluctance by many residents to have additional keys cut for janitors' use. On the other hand, residents – both those holding and not holding keys – appreciated the janitors' efforts, and demonstrated this through general conviviality and willingness (in many cases) to cooperate with janitors to overcome challenges in improving toilet cleanliness and collaborate in the maintenance of municipally-provided flush toilet facilities in the Wetlands

Regardless of municipally-managed janitorial services, the lock-and-key system continued. It remained a practice that symbolized residents' every day, on-the-ground expression of ownership of and responsibility for municipally-provided flush toilet facilities. The lock-and-key system had rapidly become the norm and was regarded by key-holding residents to be the safest, most organized way of maintaining and managing the flush facilities (see sections 4.1 and 4.2). Amidst the municipally-managed janitorial service, residents were involved in complex arrangements around organizing and maintaining locked toilets, as well as sharing these facilities with those not part of key-holding households (see below). While constantly in flux, and constituted by a range of nuances and degrees of expression, such practices exemplified residents' ownership of and responsibility for toilets. In the following chapter I present a series of examples to illustrate these practices.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder



Photo 21: Male janitorial team clearing overgrowth in the TRA.



Photo 22: Women washing and hanging up clothes in the Wetlands. Such women frequently opened locked toilets for janitors to clean.

CHAPTER 4

Locked or Not? Ownership of & Responsibility for Toilets

4.1. Key-Holding Participants

The following table presents eight key-holding participants with whom I had in-depth interviews alongside the total number of households with which they shared a toilet and the total number of people sharing that toilet. The divergent ways in which they arranged sharing groups with other households and set up communally managed lock-and-key systems are described and illustrated through a series of examples.

No.	Participant, Age & Sex	Wetlands Section	People in participant's household	Total number of households sharing toilet including participants	Total number of people sharing toilet
1	Patricia (43/f)	E	5	5	22
2	Matata (60/m)	C	2	3	11
3	Nosisa (22/f)	Zulu	4	4	21
4	Chumani (18/m)	A	5	6	29
5	Nesizwa (31/f)	D	6	7	26
6	Foreboy (41/m) Community leader	Z	1	3	5
7	Malibongwe (36/m) Community leader	B	4	5	22
8	Albertina (39/F)	C	5	8	36
	TOTALS		32	41	172
	AVERAGES		4.0	5.13	21.5

Table 3: Key-holding interviewed participants.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Based on the primary eight participants and eight toilets sampled, as represented in the table above, the average number of households sharing one toilet was 5.13. At face value these numbers look reassuringly close to the City's ideal of one toilet per five households. Each toilet surveyed had, according to these interviewed residents, two to four keys shared between households sharing a given toilet. However the precise number of keys per locked toilet varied over time, with keys in some instances being lost and/or additional keys cut. The final column displays the total number of people sharing a given toilet, yet this number also fluctuated as, even during the short fieldwork period, household sizes changed as people moved in and out because of work variations, health problems and relocation from or to other parts of the country. If we extrapolate by multiplying the table average of 5.13 households per locked toilet with the number of locked toilets (110) then it may be estimated that about 564 households were part of sharing groups for locked toilets (roughly a quarter of Wetlands households) meaning that the majority of households were not part of such groups. Significantly, however, the number of people who shared a locked toilet depended largely on the numbers of non-key-holders who asked to borrow a key to gain access. Borrowing and lending of keys in extending the sharing of locked toilets is discussed in section 4.4.

4.2 Setting up and Sustaining Household Groups to Share Locked Toilets

Key-holding interviewees explained that they had developed what I call 'sharing groups' with several other households for access to and maintenance of a given toilet. Residents holding keys in my sample tended to live in relatively close proximity to each other, or at least in the same section, although in some instances residents lived in neighbouring sections. Sharing groups were, in addition, constituted via kinship relations and/or other relationships between residents. Not all residents sharing one toilet lived close to each other however, and people would also sometimes move shacks, move to other parts of Masiphumelele or relocate from the area completely. In the latter instance – as far as my investigation uncovered – keys remained within household groups, unless whole households moved (a rare instance during fieldwork) in which case keys were given to other households that were affiliated by kinship or friendship ties. Moreover, since people were constantly moving into the Wetlands, the number of people sharing toilets (both locked and unlocked) gradually escalated.

Interviewed residents said they had not been content simply to wait for councillors, municipal officials or committee leaders to take the lead, and so had taken it upon themselves to ensure that they had access to toilets they were able to manage and maintain. Of the eight sampled households, all but one (Foreboy's) had arranged with other households to share a locked toilet without waiting to be allocated one by section committee leaders. Patricia for example, told me that she had not been able to bear to wait for conditions to improve and so got together with some of her neighbours (all also her friends) to organize to lock and to share responsibilities for a toilet in E section.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Since that time when the municipality built these toilets here, they had not been cleaning them properly, you see. Every day the toilets were dirty...shit on the floors and rubbish everywhere. This was not good, not good at all. I was very worried for my kids, you know. I thought to myself, how can they use these toilets that look like this and smell so bad? Many children got sick from this, and that's not right. So I talked with some of my neighbours and we decided to put locks on a toilet here. At least then we know that we can clean this toilet by ourselves and that our children can have a safe, clean toilet to use. (Patricia, 43-year old domestic worker and mother of four).

Patricia and four of her neighbouring friends – also mothers with children whom she had known for several years from living nearby each other in E section – decided to lock a toilet and then share cleaning tasks. They said that this had had to be done quickly because, after the first toilets had been locked, a domino effect ensued where more and more were being locked and the remaining residents were worried about being left out. (Such exclusions, and their consequences, are discussed in section 4.6.) Collectively, the five women had pooled money to buy a lock and had two extra keys cut in order to distribute one to each. There were 22 people in total in the five households in this group. The women kept keys when they were at home and, when they went to work, would leave them with a relative who was not working. From what I discovered, these keys were not made accessible to janitors, nor was any arrangement made by either the women or janitors to negotiate cleaning by the latter.

Nosisa in Zulu section was part of a sharing group with three other households, also arranged independently of initial allocations by committee leaders. She and her household shared a locked toilet with a household headed by her aunt, another headed by a close friend and a third headed by a young mother. All lived within a 50 metre radius each other. The four ladies had bought a lock together and each held a key for the toilet which they had locked. These four households comprised 17 people, a number which, during fieldwork, increased to 20, when relatives arrived from the Eastern Cape in search of work. The four ladies took turns to clean the toilet, drawing up a monthly roster and sticking it on a wall inside the toilet cubicle to remind everyone of the schedule. Cleaning supplies were bought individually, agreement having been reached that everyone had to have a broom, brush and detergent, such as Jeyes fluid or bleach. All the women worked as housekeepers in Fish Hoek during the day and would generally do their cleaning tasks in the early evening when they got home. They also bought a wooden toilet seat to be, they said, more comfortable and dignified.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder



WEEK 1	Limiso	Limiso	Limiso	Limiso	Limiso
WEEK 2	Nolutho	Nolutho	Nolutho	Nolutho	Nolutho
WEEK 3	Singathile	Singathile	Singathile	Singathile	Singathile
WEEK 4	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

Photo 23: A roster organized by Nosisa and other ladies part of a household sharing group in Zulu section.



Photo 24: A wooden toilet seat installed in the cubicle where the roster on the left was put up.

Albertina, from C section explained that she had got together with some of her relatives and friends from households in C and D sections creating, eventually, an eight-household sharing group. Albertina explained that it had been difficult to decide to whom to speak since she did not want to be accused of favouritism. However, she added, some of her relatives had been ambivalent about the idea and had said they would prefer, initially, to just share her key. Those that did agree, initially four, quickly constituted a sharing group which collectively purchased a lock for a C section toilet. One household, comprising Albertina's sister, Beauty, and her children, lived in D Section but just 50 metres away from Albertina's house. A second was headed by Beauty's D section neighbour and friend. A third was headed by Albertina's nearby C section neighbour and close friend. The fourth household included Albertina's work colleague who also lived in C section, about 100 metres away from Albertina's house. Two extra keys were cut for the latter two households which joined the sharing group within a month of the toilet having been commandeered and locked. A further three households were gradually included in the sharing group over some two years. They comprised relatives and friends of the original five, people who had moved to C section from the Eastern Cape. Keys were cut for these households too although initially they had had to share with those who already had keys. Collectively these eight households comprised 38 people, from toddlers to grandparents, immediate family, friends and colleagues, all using the one toilet.

4.3 Maintenance Practices and Sharing Responsibilities

Interviewed residents and members of the households with whom they shared locked toilets took on the responsibility for cleaning the facilities themselves. I frequently saw residents (almost always women and children) cleaning toilets that were ordinarily locked and accessible only to key holders. Mothers, elder sisters, aunts or friends would often be seen teaching girls how to clean, using brooms, mops, brushes and detergents. Most households with a key to a locked toilet kept such basic cleaning supplies. Interviewed residents explained that

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

women (young and old) were primarily responsible for cleaning locked toilets because this was a task, they said, in the female work domain. Also, they added, men in their households were usually out during the day looking for or at various jobs.

That said, some men were nevertheless part of shared toilet-cleaning responsibilities. One was 17-year old Chumani who, instructed by his mother, was assigned the task, on Mondays, of cleaning the toilet his household used. This particular toilet (in A section) was shared by six households comprising 33 people. Here the household heads had agreed that each household was to be responsible for cleaning the toilet on one day of a week, with Sunday being an off day. Chumani's father told me that the agreement was that, at the end of each day, it was the duty of the assigned household to ensure that the toilet was thoroughly cleaned. One late afternoon I saw a brother and sister, still in school uniform, trundling toward this particular toilet with a broom, bucket and detergent. They confirmed they were the nephew and niece of Chumani's father, thus being Chumani's cousins, and that it was their turn to clean the toilet on that day. They went about their duty diligently, singing as they cleaned. They doused the floor and toilet bowl with soapy water, brushed all over and then rinsed with a little more water, and locked the toilet once they had finished.

As described earlier regarding the volunteer cleaning system that preceded the lock-and-key and municipally-managed janitorial systems, men were indeed involved in cleaning toilets. And, as Lebo (from C section), a 32-year old who had worked both as a volunteer and janitor explained, while it was rare to see men cleaning toilets, this was not a task delegated solely to women.

Cleaning the toilets here is everyone's job, not only for women, because these are our toilets and we must look after them and keep them clean. Even the janitors who are working here are living in the Wetlands...so it is nobody but the people of the Wetlands who must manage the toilets here. If we work together and just try to clean as we go, then I think things will be okay, even though we know there are not enough toilets here and people are in poverty.

Lebo was one of Matata's eight children. Three of his siblings had moved out of the Wetlands and were living in different parts of the country but Lebo had decided to stay in Masiphumelele and look after his father and four younger siblings, all at school at the time. Their mother had passed away from cancer several years before. Matata told me that he had long lived in the Wetlands and knew the committee leaders well. When initial allocations of locked toilets had been made, he said, he had requested permission to lock a toilet in C section for his household and two others (one headed by one of his brothers; the other by a close friend) to share. All three were situated within 10 to 20 metres of each other. Together they comprised 19 people, and cleaning tasks fell mainly on the teenagers and young adults in each household, largely because many members were deemed either too old or too young to be cleaning toilets on a regular basis. Lebo explained that he knew some of these

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

residents from his school days and through family relations, and that they shared the cleaning of the toilet, usually in pairs, each household being responsible for this task two days weekly. The exact schedule was worked out by senior members of each households, who also ensured they had basic cleaning supplies.

Nesizwa from D section – who had been employed as a municipal janitor for three months in 2012 – explained that it was common for groups of women to set up cleaning rosters for locked toilets, as was the case with the group of key-holders for the locked toilet that she used. She, along with six other women living in the households that shared the locked toilet, had formed a cleaning task team, each woman being assigned a day during the week to service the toilet. Four of these women were her close friends from high school; one was one of her sisters and the other a cousin. In total their seven households comprised 26 people. Theirs was another example of post-allocation commandeering of an unlocked toilet which had been agreed on by the heads of each household involved. Nesizwa told me that her mother had initiated the arrangement by speaking to her friends from the other households in the present sharing group and that all had approved the importance of commandeering and locking a toilet. All households in this sharing group lived within 50 metres of each other in D section. Each household bought cleaning supplies which were kept in their homes and used by the women who cleaned the toilet. Nesizwa said that she and her friends and relatives who did the work had felt that they needed to take the initiative. Yet even though they went about their tasks conscientiously, they often felt frustrated at having to share a single toilet with over 20 others daily.

Matthew: So what do you think about the lock and key system and cleaning arrangement you have Nesizwa?

Nesizwa: I think it's a good system. Of course, as you know, there are many of us sharing this one toilet, and we wish we could have more toilets, that the government would provide us with more toilets and better facilities, like soap, toilet paper, proper toilet seats, rubbish bins and lights. But for now, this is the best we can do; it's not perfect, but we work together in order to make sure that we have a clean, safe toilet for our children, families and for ourselves to use.

Matthew: Yes, I see you are trying hard under the circumstances. Do you and the other ladies feel that this is your toilet and that you are responsible for cleaning it?

Nesizwa: Yes, this is our toilet. We have chosen to look after it and put a lock on it so that we can keep it clean and so that it will not get damaged. And we are responsible for it. But, to be honest with you, I don't think it's really fair that so many of us ... like twenty or sometimes more people, are forced to share just one toilet. Can you imagine that? Sharing a toilet with

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

twenty or thirty people? So the government and sanitation authorities need to know what is happening here in the Wetlands and give us more toilets; because many people here are suffering from poor sanitation, especially those who are living far away from the toilets. They have to borrow keys or just go in the bushes or use buckets in their shacks...this is very bad and so sad to see.

Nesizwa's sentiments were echoed amongst those using shared locked toilets. Yet, despite the pressures on them, I discovered that key-holding residents frequently lent keys to some persons not part of their key-holding sharing groups. On the one hand, such practices point to the reality of extremely limited facilities and concomitant challenges residents faced in communally sharing and managing the scant facilities. On the other, they further demonstrate residents' willingness to extend their established sharing groups and co-operate, despite the circumstances. I now present examples to illustrate key lending and sharing of locked toilets.



Photo 25: Chumani, a Wetlands resident holding the lock which secures the toilet he and his family use.



Photo 26: A young girl cleaning a toilet in Wetlands C section.

4.4 Lending Keys and Extending Sharing of Locked Toilets

While in some instances the number of households sharing locked toilets varied over time, I also found that, very commonly, people not part of key-holding households frequently asked to borrow keys, thus extending the number of people sharing a locked toilet. A pervasive theme was that of cooperation and helpfulness between key holders and non-key holders. All but one of the abovementioned interviewed residents told me that they were regularly asked by people whom they knew, or occasionally did not know, to be permitted to borrow toilet keys. Nesizwa, for example, told me that in one week about twenty people asked her if they could use the locked toilet for which

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

she had a key; usually these people would opportunistically ask when seeing her going to or coming from the toilet. Precise numbers of 'key borrowers' for a locked toilet were difficult to ascertain since key-holding household residents could not always remember how many times they had been asked to lend keys.

The one participant who did not lend his key to others was an E section street committee leader. Two of his close friends (who lived with their brothers) reportedly had keys to the toilet he used. Foreboy said that he preferred not to lend his keys to others – unless he knew them well. He also explained that he was usually very busy and thus not available to those not holding keys to ask to borrow his. The men in his sharing group (all household heads) shared cleaning duties, taking turns daily, but also opened the toilet when they were around for janitors to clean. The toilet was about 30 metres from Foreboy's house.

The imperative of having to access toilets also meant that people not holding keys sought to develop social relationships with those who did. Albertina, for example, told me she had met and made quite a few new friends through being asked to use the toilet she shared. She also explained that, on occasion, passers-by would see her leaving the toilet and then ask her if they could quickly use it. On one such occasion the woman who had made the request then asked Albertina where she lived and whether she might visit, to which Albertina agreed. The woman, Patience, later brought some toilet paper and soap for Albertina and asked whether it would be okay if she could borrow the key at times when Albertina was available. Albertina said she had been touched by the gesture and gladly embraced the proposal; and, after a few weeks, and once it was agreed upon by the others in the group, she had had a key cut for Patience and invited her to be part of the sharing group, increasing it to nine households. To share cleaning, the ladies drew up a roster comprising 18 slots (morning, afternoon and evening for each day Monday-Saturday with Sunday being a rest day) and each household was responsible for cleaning during two slots per week, as consensually agreed. Patience lived with her three children and thus the toilet's users increased from the 36 listed in table 3 to 40.

In contrast to Foreboy, Malibongwe, from B section, shared a locked toilet with four other households in that section. He explained that his having been a committee leader for about five years meant that people frequently asked to borrow his key. Malibongwe explained that he had met with some of his closest friends and collectively they had bought a lock and basic cleaning equipment to lock one of B section's five toilets. He said that he had lived in the Wetlands for over ten years after leaving Umtata in the Eastern Cape in search of work in Cape Town. His wife had given birth to two children (2010 and 2011) and also managed to get a nursing job in Fish Hoek. They had thus decided that Malibongwe would stay at home and look after the kids and run his shoe repair business from home. Being there during the week, he explained, somewhere between five and ten people a day would come to ask him for his key. He lived about 15 metres from the toilet and was able to keep an eye on those who had requested the key and to ensure the key was returned. Collectively, Malibongwe and his friends who had

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

commandeered this toilet decided to keep it locked, while opening in it when janitors came around to service it. He explained, however, that it was better for the toilet to remain locked – despite municipally-managed janitorial services – since this meant they would have control over access and cleanliness when the janitors were not cleaning in their section, as well as at night and on weekends.

Nosisa told me that strangers often asked to borrow her key to the locked toilet she and her family used. She commented that there was a general sense of communal ownership of the shared toilet since residents who borrowed keys to the toilet she shared sometimes volunteered to clean it in place of the group's cleaning team. Such residents did not replace members of the cleaning team but offered to take up cleaning tasks on an ad hoc basis, usually opportunistically volunteering to clean. She recounted an instance she had permitted a young boy who had asked her, while she was exiting the toilet, whether he could use it. She said she had told him that she had food on the stove and needed to rush back home, explaining where her house was. He returned the key and thanked her. Nosisa said he was wearing dirty clothes and looked hungry; so she gave him some mielie pap and gravy. The boy ravenously gobbled up the meal and thanked Nosisa profusely. Early the next day he returned and offered to scrub the toilet. Nosisa gave him her cleaning materials and went about washing her children. She said she was extremely impressed with this boy's humility and that he would come every other day to offer to clean the toilet. His efforts did not replace but merely added to the communal cleaning of this particular toilet.

Most interviewees expressed a willingness to lend keys commenting that, while they themselves had access to locked toilets, they wanted to be helpful to others in sharing the facilities. Patricia and Andiswa (who held keys to a toilet they shared in E section) explained that, because dwellings were so close to each other and living spaces tight, people usually interacted in the streets and therefore got to know each other quickly, thus creating a sense of community in which loaning a key was made possible.

Matthew: So what do you think about lending your keys to other people to use your toilet?

Patricia: It's alright...it's fine. You know everybody knows each and every one who lives here. And we know, as you know, that there are many more toilets here in E section (35) than in any other section in the Wetlands so we don't mind to give our keys to others.

Andiswa: Ja, it's not really a problem. If it is someone who is asking, that we know, or of course a family member or whatever, then there's no problem, we will give them the key...they also need to go to the toilet just like us. We all have the same needs.

Matthew: Ok. And what about people that you don't know? Do you give them your keys?

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Andiswa: Eish, it depends, you know. If we know they are a brother or sister or something of a friend of ours then it's fine, or if they are coming and asking very nicely and speaking properly to us....you see? But if they come here and just demand to use our toilets, which we work hard to clean, and are speaking rude, then we say no.

Overall, interviewed key-holding residents demonstrated openness to sharing keys with residents outside of key-holding household groups. Such practices forged new relationships between residents, as exemplified by Nosisa's and Albertina's stories narrated above. These communal practices in the Wetlands illustrate the importance of seeing ownership of the facilities by residents in a collective sense, since the boundaries between those who were part of sharing groups, with controlled access to locked toilets, and those who were not continually blurred and shifted. As a result, despite the majority of toilets being locked and shared by groupings of several households each, people extended these groups by lending keys and allowing access to non-key holding residents. The lock-and-key system prevailed as the central form of communal sanitation management, a means to keep the facilities clean, maintain their functionality and improve health and safety conditions around sanitation use. Significantly it also symbolized various expressions of ownership of and responsibility for municipally-provided flush toilet facilities by Wetlands residents. On the other hand however, the predominance of communal lock-and-key systems (as discussed earlier) significantly impeded municipal janitorial services and to a large extent hindered the efficacy of such operations. Rather than pointing only to the relative failure of the municipal janitorial service in the Wetlands, the critical point is the importance of service providers and responsible authorities understanding local on-the-ground practices around sanitation management and the complex ways in which such practices shape how toilet facilities are used, maintained and controlled by residents. This is a point that will be returned to below. While the efficacy of municipal janitorial services clashed with communal lock-and-key systems – a clash which has been uncovered as a major theme of this study – another significant implication of lock-and-key access and control was the inevitable exclusion of thousands of Wetlands residents without keys or not part of sharing groups. This is an issue to which I now turn.

4.5 Consequences of the Lock and Key System for Non Key-Holding Participants

Amidst this scenario of communal organization, residents – especially those not holding keys or part of sharing groups – encountered a range of sanitation related challenges. Some are described in the following sections. These challenges shed light on the wide spectrum of facets that need to be considered in the design and implementation of sanitation facilities and services in an informal settlement such as the Masiphumelele Wetlands. To briefly recap the scenario, this a settlement where the ratio between toilets and residents is hugely concerning

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

(roughly 1 toilet to 76 people and 1 toilet to 17 households) and where 110 out of 132 toilets have been locked by key-holding residents, resulting in the limiting of access for scores of people. While communal lock-and-key systems were characterized by various degrees of ownership and responsibility of municipally-provided toilets by residents, at the same time they resulted in thousands of Wetlands residents being excluded from access to such systems. As illustrated in the previous section, the lines between key-holding residents and those part of sharing groups was constantly blurred by a range of key-lending and access-allowance practices. Yet, the challenges experienced by non-key-holding participants highlight local politics and relations of power around sanitation management by residents and thus further add to the breadth of considerations to be taken into account in the planning and implementation of free basic sanitation delivery in the Wetlands informal settlement. Some of these considerations – typified by stark, dehumanizing difficulties experienced by residents, particularly women, children, the elderly and disabled – are discussed in detail in this section.

No .	Participant, Age & Sex	Section	People in participant's household	Toilet usage practices
1	Mzwandile (55/m)	Z	8	Uses nearest unlocked toilets in Zulu section & locked toilets of people have keys.
2	Nosipho (39/f)	C	5	Uses toilets at work, unlocked toilets in C section, locked toilets in C section of key-holding friends and of backyarders she knows.
3	Thobile (44/m)	E	2	Uses a locked toilet in D section; neighbour has a key.
4	Andries (36/m)	B	4	Uses unlocked toilets in A or B sections.
5	Oswald (28/m)	D	6	Uses unlocked toilets in nearby sections, locked toilets of key-holding friends and of backyarder friends.
6	Khayaletu (26/f)	Zulu	7	Uses unlocked toilets in Zulu section, at work and of backyarder friends.
7	Nokwezi (40/f)	A	4	Uses unlocked toilets in A section and at work and keeps a bucket for her children.
8	Steven (40/m)	C	5	Borrows keys to locked toilets from friends who live nearby; sometimes uses unlocked toilets in C section if functioning.
9	Thulani (33/m)	D	2	Borrows keys from people randomly (no regular key-holders) or uses unlocked toilets if he can't find a key holder.
10	Majola (52/m)	B	4	Borrows a key from a friend who lives nearby to use a locked toilet in B section.
11	Thandi (22/f)	E	4	Uses unlocked toilets in nearby sections but has a few friends who hold keys (or who know others who have keys) and borrows them to use locked toilets in E section.
12	Sive (25/m)	B	1	Uses unlocked toilets and sometimes asks people opportunistically to borrow keys or uses toilets in backyards from people he knows or just asks anyone.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Table 4: Non key-holding interviewed participants.

Residents I spoke to like Steven, Thulani and Mzwandile, lived 100 metres to 150 metres away from the nearest toilets and were not part of a sharing group with a key to a locked toilet. They explained that they had not known about the 2011 meetings to discuss toilet locking, and had had no clear idea about why toilets were being locked. They said they could understand why this had taken place but added that it was not fair that they were not consulted and included in the process. They further contended that while some of the toilets remained unlocked the locking of most of the toilets had dramatically altered their access. With just three unlocked toilets in D section and none in Z section, these men said they had opportunistically to attempt borrowing keys to use toilets; otherwise, they said, they were compelled to urinate or defecate in the open, the latter, in their opinion, being particularly dehumanizing and undignified. Other members of their households (if male) often did the same, while the females preferred keeping buckets in/just outside their homes and/or asking others to borrow keys.

32-year old Andries, a painter living in B section, complained that the lock-and-key system had significantly restricted his toilet access. There were just two unlocked toilets in the section and he reported that they were generally extremely dirty and often blocked. I corroborated this via observations.



Photo 27: Toilet in B section in disgusting condition.



Photo 28: Toilet in C section completely blocked up with human excrement.

People have no right to put locks on the toilets here. Who do they think they are? The toilets should be open for all people here to use because they are supposed to be public. If someone locks a toilet, how then can other people use that toilet if they don't have a key? Nobody even spoke to us about this plan of locking toilets. Why? Sometimes I ask to borrow a key to use a locked toilet close to my home, but the people are not always there and sometimes they are rude and tell me to go away and find another toilet to use. This makes me so angry! I am living here in the Wetlands for more than 10 years and I have a right to use these toilets just like anybody else.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Andries's grievances illustrate some of the challenges he and others faced as non-key holding residents and his perception that all toilets should have remained unlocked. Andries said that he often had to ask to borrow a key and, because of this hassle, preferred using toilets in formal parts of Masiphumelele on his way to work; and, while at home, used a bucket just outside his dwelling for his own and his family's use, especially in the evenings – a bucket he emptied in the bushes or canals. He said that he personally had not known about the meetings with committee leaders; and he argued that, while he understood there were limited facilities, there needed to be more discussion around the issue. Andries also commented on the critical importance of having more toilets installed, preferably, he said, closer to the homes of people living far from where toilets were situated.

Steven, from C section, said that he was compelled to make use of unlocked toilets but that he preferred borrowing keys and using locked toilets since, as he reported, the unlocked toilets in C section were generally in disgusting conditions. I confirmed his account with observations of these two toilets where I saw faeces smeared on walls and floors, puddles of urine, flies buzzing in and around the toilets and rats scurrying around. The functionality and usage of these toilets altered constantly, primarily as a result of blockages following the use of inappropriate anal cleansing materials (newspaper and rags), toilet parts being stolen or broken pipes and water shortages that prevented proper flushing. Interviewees said that, whenever possible, they would avoid using the unlocked toilets and would attempt rather to ask permission of a key-holder to use a locked toilet or to use toilets in formal parts of Masiphumelele. Residents also said they very commonly used buckets kept just outside or inside their shacks –later dumping the waste in canals that led to the wetland itself or in nearby bushes. Men said they sometimes also resorted to open defecation in bushes and streets.



Photo 29: One of the Wetlands canals clogged with rubbish and human waste.



Photo 30: Toilet in D section blocked with newspaper.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

During one cold, rainy afternoon in his humble shack, huddled around a worn out heater, Sive (from B section), a young man in his twenties who had lived in the Wetlands all his life, told me his opinion on the sanitation situation.

There is some kind of sanitation crisis here. Nobody knows or cares because the Wetlands is here at the back of Masi and our problems are ignored and forgotten. There is no humanity here. Some people live like kings here, loan sharks or shebeen owners or whatever; and there are people living in big, big, very expensive houses there in Kommetjie or Capri.¹⁰ But for us in the Wetlands, we are suffering with these poor services. Not only toilets, but of course also houses, education, transport and jobs.

Sive explained he would sometimes borrow keys to locked toilets. He also said he had attempted to forge agreements with people that held keys to toilets in B section, where he lived alone in a tiny shack equipped meagrely with a single bed, gas stove and radio. However, he explained, doing this was difficult since key-holding residents to the three locked toilets in the section were sometimes disinclined to lend their keys to people unless they knew them well. With just two unlocked toilets in the section, long queues formed, especially in early mornings and around dusk. If a queue got to around ten people, Sive explained, he would rather hold and find a toilet to use in formal Masiphumelele, where he worked as a construction labourer.

It's ok for me I guess. I'm a young guy and don't have any children to look after. And you know us men can go in the bushes if we have to, you know. But it's different for ladies; and, shame, it must be really very difficult and troublesome for them to go to the toilet here. It's so terrible, it makes me sad.

The constant, immensely unpleasant nag of having to knock on doors to ask for keys, to wait for people to bring keys and to hold desperately in queues to get to a toilet, was revealed as a major source of frustration experienced daily by non-key-holding residents. For so many residents, it was far easier (and safer, particularly at night) to keep buckets inside or just outside their shacks or to resort to open defecation or urination.

Nokwezi, a single mother of three school-going children in A section explained that she kept a bucket outside her shack for herself and her children, aged five, eight and twelve for evening use. She described that she would opt to use the bucket at night rather than walk to one of the unlocked toilets. During fieldwork, twelve of the fourteen toilets in A section were unlocked and I observed that usually at least half of them were flooded, with piles of excrement on the floors and bowls and/or filled with newspaper, old rags and food waste. These toilets were situated along the widest canal and close to a main tarred road at the edge of the Wetlands; and they were used by people living in various parts of Masiphumelele. Although they were accessible to service vehicles, I noted that response time to reported blockages and technical faults was usually three to five days or longer. At least half of these toilets were blocked on any given day and, once unblocked, soon got blocked once again. Nokwezi said she

¹⁰ Both are affluent suburbs; Kommetjie lies about 10km west of Masi, while Capri is about 2km to the east.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

was embarrassed and ashamed to use these toilets and that using them at night and in wet weather posed further difficulties.

How can I take my children to these toilets? It doesn't matter if it's during the day or at night, but even worse if it is at night. And it's far to get there and will take you longer at night due to the fact that there are no lights and so you cannot see where you are going. Now in winter there is water everywhere and we get completely wet if we walk there to the toilets and we don't have gumboots or anything. I must keep a bucket here for my children because of this terrible situation...at least it is by the shack and I know my children will be safe.

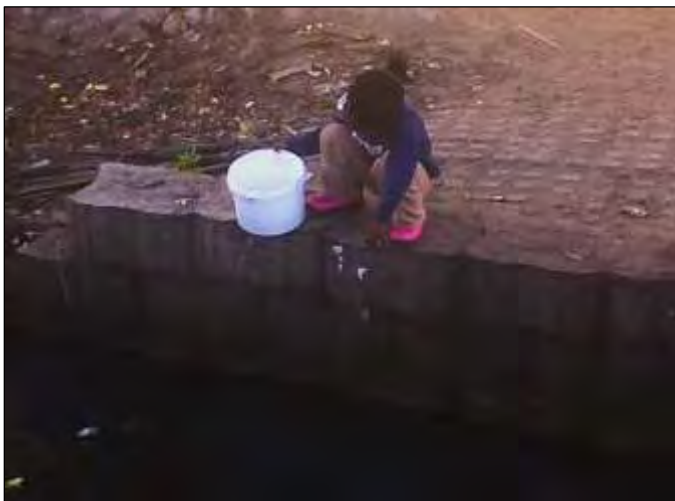


Photo 31: A young girl emptying urine in a Wetlands canal.



Photo 32: A small boy carrying a bucket of human waste to dump in a nearby canal.

Nokwezi's description captures some of the complications in accessing sanitation facilities in the Wetlands. Corroborating Nokwezi's account were comments from women around the area who did not hold keys and who revealed that they too preferred using buckets because they regarded the unlocked toilets as hazardous, filthy and beyond their control to keep clean. Residents living anything over about 100 metres from the municipal toilets also confirmed that getting to a toilet was incredibly inconvenient – especially at night or during heavy rain; and that it was most acutely problematic for the elderly or handicapped.

Thandi Mkhize from E section, a mother of two young children, told me that she always felt extremely embarrassed to go to the section's single unlocked toilet and completely avoided going at night due to the threat of *tsotsis* (thugs) and a fear of darkness. She had some friends who lived nearby from whom she would sometimes borrow a key but, she added, they were not always at home and she did not like bothering them in the evening while they were sleeping, being cautious not to jeopardize her established relations to gain access to locked toilets.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Matthew: What do you do if you can't get a key from someone Thandi?

Thandi: Eish, I will try to hold through the night if I can and make sure I don't drink anything a few hours before going to bed. But if I have to go I ask my boyfriend to come with me quickly.

Matthew: Ok, and what about your kids?

Thandi: I have a bucket for them just in case, but I also tell them to not drink anything before bedtime. In the day it is OK, because it is safer and I can take them to a toilet or ask a friend who has a key.

Matthew: I see. And do you think Wetlands residents are responsible for looking after the toilets?

Thandi: No, not at all. It is not our responsibility. If you could say, here is your toilet for your family, then fine, I must look after it, of course. But how can you say that the people of the Wetlands must clean the toilets when there are so little toilets and so many thousands of people? No, we need many more toilets and better services, then we can be responsible.

Thandi's comments reflect an opinion held by many residents – whether part of sharing groups or not – that not enough was being done by the municipality to improve their conditions. While my fieldwork unearthed senses of ownership of and responsibility for the toilet facilities amongst key holding residents, a stance like Thandi's added nuance to the range of opinions expressed. In investigating communal sanitation management practices and expressions of ownership, other often more pressing issues emerged as pervasive in the daily tribulations of Wetlands residents. I consider some of these in the following section. I do so because such perceptions point to the wide range of concerns that need to be taken into account when designing and implementing sanitation services for residents of an informal settlement like the Wetlands.

4.5.1 Residents' Expectations of Authorities

Residents I spoke to – whether holding locked toilet keys or not – said they felt neglected and cast aside by what they generally referred to as 'the government'. Patrick, a 49-year old minibus driver and father of three young children remarked during a conversation one chilly morning:

I've got an anger for the country...why is our country ignoring the people who are living in the informal settlements? Ignoring the people who put them [in]to the parliament, the people who make them to be leaders of the country...in power, the people who put them in power...that is where my anger is now...I'm angry with the politicians; why they don't respond, when there is a huge disaster like this one in this area,

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

which is not the first time; and now it's worse than before, and how long is this situation going to be going on in this area?

Such expressions formed part of a common local discourse that I noticed around distrust and disillusionment with authorities. They related directly to residents' attitudes toward sanitation ownership, with especially non-key holding residents saying that, since they felt abandoned by the responsible authorities who provided them with pitiable sanitation services, there was very little reason for them to take on maintenance of the facilities. These kinds of local discourse provide a crucial perspective into Wetlands residents' perceptions toward authorities and hence the disinclination amongst many toward taking up ownership of and responsibility for toilets. Khayaletu, a 26 year-old mother of five commented:

These things are there – public toilets in Fish Hoek; but not here in the Wetlands. Why is the municipality treating us like this? It's not right, not fair. We are also human beings and deserve the same services. Every time I have to go to the toilet here I feel horrible inside my stomach. I hate using these toilets and only go if I am desperate. Otherwise, I try to hold and go to ask a friend in Masiphumelele in a backyard shack or somewhere else. But at night especially it is really terrible. I am scared to go outside because there are many *tsotsis* here and no light for you to see what you are doing ... so I keep a bucket at home. I cannot live like this. I am so tired of it.

Khayaletu's expressed frustration illustrates some of struggles that residents – especially women – faced when using the few unlocked toilets. They also reiterate the daily challenges of finding safe, clean toilets and the need, very often, to go outside the Wetlands to do so. Such instances contributed to people's detachment from any sense of ownership of or responsibility for the facilities and to their sense of alienation by government.

Also expressing frustration, Thulani Guzuba, a 33 year-old electrician from D section exclaimed:

So why are proper toilets not provided here in the Wetlands? The rich white and coloured people there in Fish Hoek and Ocean View have at least one toilet in their houses ... sometimes even more than one toilet there! And here we are in the Wetlands, look, sharing one toilet maybe with 50 or 100 people! This is not right ... we are not animals; but still they (the municipality/government) think we can live like this.

Research participants also expressed frustration regarding the absence at toilets of necessities such as toilet paper, wash basins, soap and especially lighting. Many said they bought their own toilet paper and soap, for their own and for their children's health and hygiene. I frequently observed residents carrying toilet paper to and from toilets and washing their hands with soap under a faint trickle at one of the scarce standpipes. Residents said they had some control over providing such materials since they were relatively cheap and could be purchased easily at shops in the Wetlands and surrounds. An issue like lighting, however, was something residents complained they

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

had little control over. Many residents recounted stories of people they knew (family and friends) that had been accosted and/or attacked by *tsotsis* waiting in or around toilets at night. Having a key to a locked toilet made it somewhat safer to access a toilet without attackers lurking inside the toilet cubicle; but the threat of danger was still present as very often residents had to walk anything from five to twenty minutes along narrow footpaths – with few side escapes that often led to dead ends – comprising the passages through the Wetlands, to get to the nearest toilet. Doing so, they said, exposed them to potential criminals and assailants. The risk was further exacerbated by poor lighting in the vicinity of most toilets.

A regularly expressed opinion of residents was that the local and national governments were not adequately providing basic services to them. These, they pointed out, had been promised at the dawn of South African democracy over 20 years previously, and continue to be promised to residents in ward councillor public meetings that implored people to be patient for just a little longer, drawn out promises I listened to during such meetings in Masiphumelele and also heard about from residents. In one instance ward councillor, Felicity Purchase, was booed and jeered by Wetlands residents during an informal meeting around potential housing relocations to the TRA. She was telling residents about the housing waiting list and that the municipality was making plans to build more houses and flats to accommodate especially Wetlands residents. However, when she explained that this would take time (six months to a year) and that only a couple of hundred people might be relocated, residents angrily disrupted the meeting.

Overall, key-holders or not, residents contended that they felt cast aside and that, while they understood that major changes do not happen overnight, much more could be done to make incremental changes. As much as ownership of and responsibility for the toilet facilities were being expressed through the lock-and-key system, simultaneously Wetlands residents were desperate to have their daily sanitation struggles taken more seriously by those elected to office and by officials. Medium to long term development plans had been initiated and/or planned (such as the housing plan in the TRA). Yet, as expressed by Wetlands residents, little was being done in the short term, particularly in terms of small-scale but tangible improvements, for example through provision of soap dispensers or toilet paper to households. Despite their frustrations, Wetlands residents continued to take up various forms of ownership and responsibility for the municipally-provided toilet facilities.

On the one hand, residents demonstrated a strong spirit of communalism regarding sharing toilets, despite the controlled access rendered by their lock-and-key system. Given extremely challenging circumstances and limited toilets in relation to people, Wetlands residents demonstrated a range of senses of ownership of and responsibility for the toilet facilities. On the other hand, they also contended that it was not really their responsibility to maintain the toilets and said they were not prepared to take full-on ownership of them unless they were provided on a one flush toilet per household basis. Moreover, the negative implications of the lock-and-key system were laid bare by

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

the large number of residents who did not have direct access to keys to locked toilets. This compounds the broad and extremely complex range of factors that need to be reflected upon in the provision, maintenance and management of basic sanitation services in informal settlements, as evinced through fieldwork research in the Masiphumelele Wetlands.

The following chapter presents data on the TRA and backyard plots in Masiphumelele. Those data are presented in order to demonstrate comparisons with the Wetlands concerning the quality of and access to flush toilets, as well as divergent communal and public management operations. Conditions in these contrasting areas provide further insight into the drivers of and constraints to viable communal sanitation management in South African informal settlements, also certainly applicable to many global contexts



Photo 33: A girl at a Wetlands canal hunches tiredly before washing some dishes.



Photo 34: A woman stands despairingly outside her shack. She has been living in the same shack for almost 25 years and was promised an RDP house 15 years ago.

CHAPTER 5

Communal and Municipally-Managed Janitor Managed Sanitation in the TRA and Backyards

5.1 Sanitation in the TRA

There are 58 municipally provided full flush toilets in the Masiphumelele TRA, built between late 2004 and early 2005 and comprising single concrete cubicles distributed between the area's dwellings. There is a total of 14 standpipes in the area, each 10 to 20 metres away from the nearest toilet. During fieldwork, all 58 toilets were unlocked and open to use on a public access basis. Usage was however not exclusive to TRA residents since, as indicated earlier, various Wetlands residents also frequently utilized the facilities due to their open access and relative cleanliness and functionality as compared with the unlocked Wetlands toilets. Significantly, however, it seemed that this kind of universal open access was possible only because of the relatively small population in relation to toilets as contrasted with the Wetlands. Roughly 1,000 people (approximately 200 households) shared the 58 toilets – meaning a ratio of 3.5 TRA households and 17 TRA residents per toilet on average by comparison with the Wetlands' ratios of 17 households and 76 residents per toilet.

O&M issues, such as blockages, were rare in the TRA. I seldom observed dysfunctional toilets and, because they were all unlocked, municipal janitors and technicians deployed in the area were able to clean and service them regularly. Moreover, the TRA's dirt roads are wide enough for vehicles to pass, allowing for far more effective O&M by the municipal sanitation department than in the Wetlands with its narrow alleys between houses. Being a temporary relocation area, the local housing authorities regulated the settlement, prohibiting informal shack building. This meant the numbers of residents and the demand on the toilets remained much the same over time and that the facilities could relatively easily be kept in working order. This was despite TRA toilets being used at times by Wetlands residents, most frequently during daytimes; especially by those from the closest E section about 100 metres from the TRA.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder



Photo 35: The TRA entrance.



Photo 36: Mounds of dirt dropped by O&M vehicles for residents to dam up shacks and toilets with in the TRA

5.1.1 Communal Responsibility and Municipally-Managed Janitorial Services

For several years, I was told, residents had taken responsibility for maintaining the TRA toilets. Residents and committee leaders explained that meetings had been held where it was agreed that residents would collectively manage the facilities by pooling resources to purchase cleaning supplies and maintain the toilets on a daily basis, and that the toilets were to be kept open rather than locked. It was decided that responsibility for each toilet was taken by four or five households in close proximity to it and they would organize cleaning tasks independently. The spatial distribution of toilets in the TRA facilitated this arrangement and the relatively small population made it quite easy to organise meetings and consult most residents. TRA leaders told me that speaking to people and making arrangements around communal sanitation management was, in their opinion, a lot more workable than in the Wetlands. As Innocent, one of the TRA committee leaders at the time explained, he often went door-to-door speaking to residents about updates from the council and fielding concerns. In his opinion, TRA residents – many of whom had previously lived in the Wetlands – were relatively content with the sanitation facilities and had demonstrated a willingness to take ownership of and responsibility for the toilets in the area.

Conversations with residents and observations of communal sanitation practices revealed a wide spectrum of expressions of ownership. During occasional weekend visits, I always saw residents cleaning toilets with brooms, mops and detergents. Moreover, residents told me that they were grateful for the conditions there, as compared to the Wetlands, and that it was important that they worked together to maintain the facilities, even after municipally-managed janitorial services had begun late in 2011. With the burden of work significantly lightened during the

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

week by janitors, residents spent just a few hours each weekend cleaning the toilets when janitors were off shift. Residents said this arrangement was quite informal and that there was an agreement that households would clean the toilet assigned to them. While household groupings each generally cleaned one toilet, residents said that it was common for people living anywhere in the TRA to use any toilets – they all knew each other to some degree – and that residents from the Wetlands and other parts of Masiphumelele, usually those visiting relative or friends in the TRA, also made use of the facilities, as did residents of the neighbouring Wetlands E section, a point corroborated by residents from the section. The TRA's toilet management systems were such that there was a far smaller incidence of alternative sanitation practices than was the case in the Wetlands. As a result of there being relatively easily accessible and clean toilets in the TRA, no residents I spoke to used buckets in their homes and all said that open defecation and urination was extremely rare. I did occasionally see men urinating in bushes surrounding the TRA, but this was rare as compared with the Wetlands. As evinced through their sharing of toilet cleaning tasks, TRA residents' communal responsibility served to strengthen social relations and a sense of communalism.

The TRA provided an example of how communally-managed (as well as municipally-managed janitor-serviced) toilet organization can operate relatively successfully, given amenable conditions relating to population size, numbers and spatial distribution of toilets, and negotiation and organization by committee leaders and residents alike. It must be remembered however that the transitory nature of population in the TRA was a significant facilitator of the relative efficacy of communal sanitation management in the settlement. In contrast to the Wetlands, TRA residents were in the majority *en-route* to improved housing and thus were likely to be quite willing to cooperate in the communal sharing of toilet cleaning and maintenance tasks. Wetlands residents found themselves in altogether disparate housing situations; one of uncertainty and a sense of being trapped in one place. This reality may well have lent to the practice of commandeering and locking selected toilets. While this is ostensibly a matter conjecture, it is worth mentioning the ways in which settlement circumstance and degrees of permanence influenced local attitudes and expressions concerning sanitation management.

5.2 Sanitation in Backyards

Another relatively successful communal model was observed in backyards in formal parts of Masiphumelele where people had built shacks and where there were concentrations of residents best described as backyarders. Such backyarders tended to have access to a relatively safe and clean flushing toilet on the plots of lands (with RDP/municipally built houses) where they resided, each toilet being shared, on average, by about five households (CoCT 2011). Extrapolating from the city average of 3.5 people per household (CoCT 2011), this means that generally seventeen or eighteen people shared a backyard toilet. This varied extensively, however, depending on

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

the plot. Numbers ranged from five to twenty-five users per toilet. Municipally-developed houses typically had internally-installed toilets. However not all RDP or masonry houses had internal toilets meaning that the ratio of backyard toilets to residents varied, depending on the numbers of backyard residents on each plot and also on whether the primary residents and dependants also had to use the site's outside toilet. Also, in some cases more than five households shared a single toilet, and in some cases less.¹¹

Backyarders lived in either shacks or brick dwellings and paid rent for these spaces to RDP home owners, usually about R500 per month. This was very common in Masiphumelele, allowing plot owners to earn extra income through leasing out sections of their residential land and providing other residents who did not own or have access to plots to live in a situation that allowed them access to flush toilets and clean running water. Toilets shared by backyarders were situated between five and twenty metres from their homes, making access much easier and more convenient than for Wetlands or TRA residents. All toilets also had standpipes and washbasins next to the single cubicles. These toilets were always unlocked and open for all residents in that particular backyard to use.

5.2.1 Communal Responsibility by Backyarders

As in the TRA, backyarders took up communal ownership of and responsibility for their shared toilets facilities. Backyarders I spoke to explained that keeping the toilets they shared clean was relatively manageable and straightforward because, in most cases, a set number of people made use of the facilities and all knew each other to some degree, very often being related or connected via friendship ties. The very fact that backyarders lived in close proximity to each other, and within a circumscribed often enclosed area, also facilitated the development of social connections: I often saw young men from different households in a single backyard visiting each other to play cards, drink local beer or watch soccer, for example; and it was not uncommon to see residents getting together to braai (barbecue) and chat in the yards where they lived.

A sense of communal responsibility between backyarders was also apparent in the generally clean toilet conditions I observed as well as from their remarks on responsibility. Many said they believed it was important for everyone to share cleaning duties. Most backyarders expressed appreciation for having a clean, functioning toilet very close to where they lived and argued that, while sanitation access could certainly improve, it was at least not nearly as dire as the Wetlands situation, where some had lived previously and others had visited. Some backyarders told me one of the main reasons for moving to a backyard shack was because of the toilet facilities.

¹¹ Time constraints meant it was not possible to do a survey of the ratio of people to toilets of all backyards. A sample survey of some 20 backyards conducted during fieldwork revealed an average of 14 to 1, a few less than CoCT's 2011 estimate.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Backyard toilets were also linked with demands by Wetlands residents, some of whom explained they frequently asked friends (or sometimes strangers too) who were living in backyard shacks to be allowed to use their shared toilet. This was most common when a formal area plot was relatively close to a Wetlands shack or when social relations facilitated such use. Other Wetlands residents often made use of backyarder facilities on their way to and from work in formal Masiphumelele or in another suburb. RDP-house residents explained that they had no issues with Wetlands residents making use of their backyard toilets – provided they left the facilities clean – and that they had rarely encountered any problems in this regard.

In contrast to sanitation in the TRA and backyards, circumstances in the Wetlands, as demonstrated earlier, were far more complicated and challenging to manage. Access to and availability of clean, functioning toilets was constrained by a plethora of factors. The ways in which ownership of and responsibility for toilet facilities was perceived and expressed by residents took on diverse forms in the Wetlands, exemplified by lock-and-key arrangements and as well as various forms of key lending and sharing access to padlocked toilets. The continually shifting nature of sharing groups as constituted and shaped by social relations and kinship ties lent itself toward the difficulty in understanding the complexity of communal sanitation management in the settlement. Such arrangements did nevertheless reveal a wide breadth of degrees of ownership and responsibility of municipally-provided full-flush toilet facilities by Wetlands and TRA residents, highlighting the spectrum of constraints to and nuances of communally and municipally-managed sanitation in these adjacent settlements.

Overall, expectations by authorities that informal settlement residents adopt responsibility and ownership for municipally-installed free basic sanitation facilities ran alongside strategies for sanitation management by service providers – such as municipal janitorial and operation and maintenance services – and resulted in a wide range of constraining circumstances to a clearly defined plan for cooperation between all stakeholders involved.

The themes and factors explored and analysed in the preceding sections have illustrated and shed light on some of the considerations that need to be considered in the planning and implementation of sanitation and other development interventions in informal settlements. Local expectations need to be clearly understood, as well as how they change over time and what factors assist in their production and malleability. Moreover, providing sanitation and toilet maintenance services require understanding, first, what local practices are and second and as regards the idea of ownership, understanding how people take possession of facilities once they are provided and how such practices in turn affect the ways in which those facilities are used and maintained.

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder



Photo 37: Backyard shack alongside a RDP house. The outside toilet is to the right of the picture.



Photo 38: Five backyard dwellings alongside an RDP house in central Masiphumelele. The shared toilet is to the right of the main homestead.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions

Drawing my investigation to a close, the most salient finding of this dissertation is that Wetlands and TRA residents took up responsibility for organizing communal sanitation maintenance systems and continued doing so even after the introduction of municipally-managed janitorial services. Their doing that exemplifies their willingness to take a degree of ownership of and responsibility for the municipally-provided facilities in their areas. Such communalism in terms of sanitation management was constituted not only through family and friendship ties but also via a collective sense of cooperation in their having to confront the everyday challenges around using and maintaining toilets that were provided for all residents in the areas to use.

The issues discussed illustrate and point to some of the factors that need to be carefully considered when designing and implementing sanitation policy for informal settlements. Suggesting simply – as WSISU (2010) has done – that 'residents are expected to clean and keep toilets hygienic', fails to take into account the ways in which a very limited sanitation infrastructure leads to complex social realities of informal settlements, and where – as demonstrated by the Masiphumelele Wetlands case – communal maintenance of toilet facilities was found to be extremely challenging to sustain, and inevitably excluded residents via lock-and-key systems. Regardless of expectations that residents should take on responsibilities as hoped for by sanitation authorities, it is critical to understand the spectrum of social, economic, environmental and infrastructural constraints at play and how these directly configure communal sanitation management practices.

I have advocated multi-factorial, critical approaches informed by understandings of shifts, flows and contingencies in informal settlements; in particular, awareness of the nuances of social, cultural and political relationships which constitute and perpetuate practices around maintenance and management of sanitation facilities. This conceptualization concerning informal settlement development in general – and service delivery in particular – lends itself to an explicitly bottom-up approach, one that emphasizes local contexts and their permutations as central to the task of improving conditions and facilities in slum settings.

Based on the findings presented in the preceding chapters, communal and public sanitation access and quality in the Masiphumelele Wetlands are constrained by a wide range of social and environmental factors. These constraints exemplify the immense difficulties that residents faced on a daily basis and undermine the narrative that informal settlement residents ought to take ownership of municipally-installed flush toilets provided in the

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

areas where they reside. Yet my research has also revealed complex communal toilet maintenance arrangements, as typified by lock-and-key systems. Ownership and responsibility concerning communal toilet management were shown to be expressed by residents, albeit in diverse and complex ways, fulfilling the official anticipation that residents should play their part in looking after toilets provided by sanitation authorities.

However such communal sanitation practices – while representing incremental improvements in access, safety, health and dignity for a significant proportion of Wetlands residents – point importantly to the complex of factors which restrict progressive sanitation improvements on a settlement-wide scale. Many Wetlands residents were compelled to make use of the few unlocked toilets, toilets in backyards in formal Masiphumelele and/or keep buckets in their shacks for use mainly at night, buckets they then emptied into the canals and bushes. Moreover, open defecation and urination were additional consequences of the strained levels of access encountered by many Wetlands residents, further demonstrating the dire circumstances relating to sanitation and human settlement.

The realities of sanitation in the Wetlands undermined and severely restricted what residents regarded as adequate, safe, hygienic, dignified sanitation, thereby stunting universal communal ownership of and responsibility for municipally provided toilet facilities. The realities of Wetlands sanitation also precipitated tensions between residents, added pressure on backyarders' toilets and other public toilets and at times led to anger, frustration and hopelessness as well as some mistrust between those who hold keys and those who do not. They also led to similarly antagonistic feelings towards municipal/national authorities, often vented as protests, noncompliance and unwillingness to cooperate with the responsible municipal councillor during community meetings.

Despite this, as has been illustrated, although communal sanitation practices expressing ownership and responsibility were evident, there remains much to be done by responsible municipal and national authorities to foster such practices in light of the range of attendant constraints. Such development work would include a wide spectrum of tasks, involving not only providing increased services and maintenance systems, but also incisive consultation and negotiation with local residents and ongoing monitoring, evaluation and readapting of the sanitation management practices of residents, municipal janitors, officials and all other stakeholders involved.

6.1 Adversity and Adaptation in the Wetlands

In the face of the odds, Wetlands residents found ways – exemplified by lock-and-key systems of access and control and communal cleaning – to manage their scant sanitation facilities. This is not purely a symbol of the success of 'residential participation' or civil/state partnership. It is also importantly a consequence of the intensely limited levels of sanitation provision, the unforgiving conditions that prevail in the area and the inadequacy of

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

official efforts to ameliorate the situation. Apart from the implementation of day-time municipally-managed janitorial services, Wetlands residents' concerns have largely gone unheeded. This has produced an atmosphere of uncertainty *vis-à-vis* sanitation service delivery and a tension between self-interest, which has led toilets being commandeered and locked, and communalism in that that process has not been undertaken individually and keys to locked toilets are sometimes loaned to persons outside a toilet sharing group. This tension is encapsulated in Wetlands residents' sense of needing to care for their own needs by participating in sharing groups which effectively excluded most others and their sense of communalism in permitting some of those others to use their commandeered facilities.

The data reveal that Masiphumelele Wetlands residents have long been taking ownership of and responsibility for the sanitation facilities in the settlement, despite adversities and the exclusion of the majority of residents from household sharing groups managing access to locked toilets. Yet, as I have argued, this does not reflect a 'triumph' of local communal toilet management in the sense of benefitting the entire population; rather it illustrates the range of constraints and challenges to municipally provided sanitation and thus the importance of taking into account on-the-ground realities in the planning, implementation, maintenance and development of sanitation in informal settlements. I have further contended that the use of statistics alone to display levels of sanitation access, in order to assert that sanitation is adequately provided for in informal settlements, fails to grasp the extent to which local social dynamics affect such sanitation provision and indeed often to undermine their efficacy. Moreover, quantitative representations of on-the-ground realities lack awareness of the myriad dimensions related to particularistic use, maintenance and negotiation of sanitation facilities. An over-emphasis on measureable service delivery targets and project outcomes thus operates to reduce, as well as cloud the complexity of factors at play in a given development context. In this light, cultivating understanding of local, on-the-ground attitudes and practices is crucial to the design, planning, implementation and sustaining of services and facilities in slum areas. Careful consideration of the realities and dynamics of the target populations of development initiatives serve to extend the knowledge base upon which effective, successful projects are actualized.

In the face of trying circumstances, I encountered remarkable resilience amongst Wetlands residents. What I found was that many had taken incredible initiative in organizing control and maintenance of and access to toilets they had commandeered and locked. Such practices starkly reflect their resourcefulness, directly challenging an official, rather patronising line that 'residents need to be educated and taught how to clean and manage toilets' and access to them. It is thus not 'community education programmes' that are needed. As residents told me, what they need is simply more toilets; and also sanitation facilities that are provided with cleaning materials, soap, detergents, lighting and security. One resident's comment exemplifies:

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

Do they [the municipality] really think that we don't know how to use and clean a toilet? Haibo! [No!]. This kind of thinking is crazy, man! We are not animals or uncultured people. We know fully well how to look after toilets and that; so that is not the problem at all. But here there are not enough toilets, not enough at all. Other communities have flush toilets. People from government come to promise us all that things will get better, but nothing has been done. And, of course, because there are thousands of people living here, the toilets get disgusting and don't work properly...and so people have locked them. Give us more toilets and better quality services and you will see that there will be less problems. (Phumlani, 35 year-old male construction worker).

In addition, fieldwork revealed tremendous openness by Wetlands residents to negotiate roles and responsibilities, and to be part of processes for organizing quality, safe, clean, accessible albeit shared sanitation. In general, the potential of residents to contribute to the planning, implementation and maintenance of sanitation systems was remarkable, as evidenced by the range of communally arranged and sustained modes of organizing control and maintenance of, and access to municipally provided toilets located in otherwise public areas of the settlement.

6.2 Crises within Crises

Coupled with the range of social, economic and environmental constraints impeding improved communal and public sanitation in the Wetlands, various institutional or managerial constraints were seen to derive from the roles played by community leaders, ward councillors and municipal officials. My intention is by no means to lay the burden of blame on any set of stakeholders. Rather it is to elucidate the point that managerial limitations were constituted by interplays between those in leadership positions. The vast gap between national sanitation policy and municipal implementation at the inception of municipally provided toilet facilities in the Wetlands in 2010/2011 was followed by the relative inability of local section committee leaders (as well as ward councillors) to devise effective management and maintenance systems that would benefit informal settlement residents as universally as possible.

From the onset it precipitously challenged local leadership. Prior to the development of public volunteer and communal lock-and-key systems in the Wetlands, residents including local leaders were confronted with having to figure out how best to designate responsibilities amongst residents for managing and maintaining the facilities. Yet while it behove local leadership to find solutions, the scale of the challenge was never imagined, either by themselves or by municipal officials; and it has remained in many ways beyond their control.

Wetlands residents and leaders frequently voiced their grievances about both sanitation and housing to ward councillors and municipal officials, clearly seeing the (local) state as responsible for basic service delivery,

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

organization and its upkeep. Yet, because ward councillors and municipal officials tended to measure success in terms of overall numbers of basic services delivered, and failed to pay attention to site-specific circumstances, they were unable to see that on-the-ground improvements that had been implemented were not meeting the real needs on the ground, or that residents' efforts to ensure their own household's access to facilities all too often led to others being excluded.

6.3 Reconceptualizing Ownership

Also clear from the Wetlands case is that, in terms of municipally provided flush toilets in informal settlements, ownership must be seen as conditional. This is especially when flush toilets, provided ostensibly temporarily and for public use in areas where toilets cannot be installed on a one-per-household basis. Ownership in such a context needs to be seen as 'shared', 'public', 'communal' or 'collective'. As this research has shown, there is a disconnect between how expectations of ownership are conceptualised by municipalities, service providers and developers, and how people express ownership in reality. Furthermore, *it is residents' reactions to and interactions with these facilities that configure particular notions and expressions of ownership*; as exemplified by the communally-managed sanitation systems in the Wetlands and that I have described above.

Such practices were also influenced by the municipally-managed janitorial services at work in the Wetlands and TRA. The implementation of janitorial services in such areas presents a commitment by municipalities and, through the EPWP the national government, to take responsibility not only for providing sanitation facilities, but also for servicing and maintaining them. Such a commitment derived in part from an understanding – foisted on government by civil society movements such as the Social Justice Coalition – that public toilet communal management, by informal settlement residents, cannot be sustained. However, based on the communal sanitation management systems I have documented as manifesting in the Wetlands and TRA, this assumption is debatable and lacks accounting of the history of local sanitation management efforts that have occurred independently of intervention by formal authorities.

An influential underlying factor regarding officials' expectations regarding residents' responsibilities was that the national FBS policy had only imagined toilet provision on a one-per-household basis and not for large numbers of informal settlement residents on a shared, supposedly communally managed basis. That policy also envisaged that people would take responsibility as 'owners' of the facilities that they were given – but see Barnes *et al.* (2011) who show that this is not always the case even in RDP houses which are provided with toilets. In addition, municipal officials country-wide have underestimated the willingness of informal settlement residents to accept the responsibilities associated with shared facilities in ways typified in the Masiphumelele Wetlands case. Moreover, residents' perceptions and expectations relating to responsibilities for freely provided basic sanitation facilities have not been fully taken into account, nor has community consultation been a prominent feature of local

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

development imperatives. The FBS policy – in particular in terms of sanitation services – was overly prescriptive, with implementation having taken place in many instances neither with consultation with residents nor with consideration of residents' opinions. Such a conclusion is corroborated by the Masiphumelele Wetlands context, where thousands were excluded from negotiation and communication channels.

South Africa's current urban sanitation crisis exemplifies how an ostensibly well intentioned policy has failed in its implementation due to government officials' use of a top-down approach and their strong emphasis on using technological and social engineering methods to achieve the policy's aims. This is opposed to a bottom-up approach which is an inclusive, people-driven form of governance constituted by a large number of persons and groups collaboratively interacting to make decisions and strategies together. Such an approach emphasizes extensive participation and collaboration between stakeholders, and draws from nuanced understandings of the shifting circumstances and social dynamics of locales that are the targets of development projects.

Moreover, the nature of service delivery to South African informal settlements has tended to adhere to a generic blueprint, rather than being designed according to specific contexts. Local municipal sanitation authorities have largely been unable to mould service implementation and maintenance on the basis of an understanding of the social, economic, political and environmental complexities of each particular informal settlement.

Ownership and responsibility relating to the delivery and maintenance of free basic sanitation services, on the part of all stakeholders involved, need to be profoundly scrutinized and reconceptualised. In particular, these two terms themselves need to be reconsidered so that they reflect and are informed by the environmental, economic, political, social and cultural realities of the specific areas that are the sites of sanitation service implementation. This study illustrates the critical importance of cultivating awareness and understanding among officials and government representatives at all levels of the multifold ways in which people conceptualize and express a sense of ownership of and responsibility for municipally provided toilets as well as of the historical processes and power dynamics that have in large part shaped contemporary informal settlement milieus.

6.4 On-the-Ground Realities and Development Design and Implementation

Sanitation service delivery in informal settlements remains one of South Africa's greatest contemporary socio-economic development challenges. Generating ethnographic data and insight into the on-the-ground circumstances of informal settlements – as well as into the socio-historical progressions – is pivotal in the design and implementation of sanitation service delivery. That is because improving a given field goes hand-in-hand with acute understanding of that field. Attention needs to be given to the urgent sanitation realities of informal settlements; where poor sanitation conditions produce ramifications that extend beyond simply going to the toilet, but also severely impinge on arenas such as health, safety, environmental sustainability, employment, mutuality

WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

and cooperation, and indeed human dignity. Informal settlement service delivery then is multifactorial and multi-dimensional and demands consideration of the interrelatedness of various aspects of local development.

Attention must also be given to site-specific circumstances in order to generate improvements and solutions to the quality of sanitation. Communal ownership and responsibility cannot merely be expected, they must be facilitated, garnered and sustained, first by the authorities and then by local residents in a transparent, viable manner that allows quality of sanitation and access to it to develop incrementally.

Current practices and perceptions around sanitation in areas such as the Masiphumelele Wetlands need to be judiciously understood so as to accurately inform development in such areas. This is not only the task of academic researchers; local leaders and councillors also need to cultivate awareness of socio-cultural phenomena concerned with such development. It is therefore not merely population figures in relation to number of toilets, but more crucially the interactions and dynamics between the people that constitute informal settlement sanitation realities, and indeed all other spheres of social life and everyday circumstance.

The agency of people and the networks of relations they create are vital factors to take into account since development projects are configured and maintained through the interactions and relationships between all stakeholders, and success or failure hinges on these (Mosse 2005). Ultimately, it is not “policy consensus, rational planning or bureaucratic procedures that make projects run...it is personalities, brokering skills and channels of influence of individual mediators, buffers and filters” (Mosse 2005:125). Moreover, as Mosse (2005:130) adds, project implementation is not merely about executing policy, it is about cultivating networks of relationships that produce the realities of projects at every level. The very success of development projects hinges on effectively interpreting policy, and reiterating it in relation to on-the-ground practice (Mosse 2005:231). Development interventions need therefore to be perpetually iterative in nature; to be efficacious, they must react to and interact with changing circumstances and their agents must be aware of constraints as they arise.

This ethnography has described, discussed, analysed and interpreted various communally managed sanitation practices used by Masiphumelele Wetlands, TRA and backyard residents, as well as municipally-managed janitorial services. Relating the perceptions and experiences of all relevant stakeholders and research participants has revealed a wide range of constraining and stimulating factors relating to sanitation development and service delivery in the field sites for this study but indeed also applicable to other informal settlement contexts in South Africa and across the globe. The data presented has supported the argument that it is only through such on-the-ground, nuanced, multi-factorial understanding that future design and implementation of sanitation development projects in South African informal settlements can succeed in order to hopefully address one of the nation’s greatest and most urgent priorities.

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WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town

Matthew Schroeder

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WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town
Matthew Schroeder

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Matthew Schroeder

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WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town
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WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

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WHOSE TOILET IS IT ANYWAY?

An Ethnographic Investigation into Communally Managed and Janitor Serviced Sanitation Facilities in Masiphumelele, Cape Town
Matthew Schroeder
